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The Rise and Fall of New Bedford Whaling, as Documented by the Whalemen's Shipping List and Merchants' Transcript

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**THE RISE AND FALL OF NEW BEDFORD WHALING, AS
DOCUMENTED BY THE WHALEMEN'S SHIPPING LIST AND
MERCHANTS' TRANSCRIPT**

by
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*A paper submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Marine Affairs*

University of Rhode Island
1993

Major Paper
Master of Marine Affairs

Approved _____
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1993

To Lori

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INTRODUCTION

Whaling was once a great industry in the United States. Whole communities were dependent on its success...The foundation of many a stately old mansion in New England rests on 'oil and bone.' But whaling was not a passing boom...Its influence as a social and economic factor was widespread. Whaling was a unit in a great whole—a part of the vast industrial interests of a growing country. It is so no longer. Whaling is practically dead. The almost complete cycle of whaling activity is a good lesson in economics—the lesson of a flourishing enterprise quickly wiped out by changing economic conditions. The history of whaling forms an important chapter in the commercial history of the United States.¹

Those words were written in 1906 when the United States had a whaling fleet of 42 vessels. Sixty years earlier, the United States had a whaling fleet of 735 vessels and was the undisputed world champion of whaling. Sixty-five years later, the last American whaler left Richmond, California. The chapter of American whaling was closed 357 years after Capt. John Smith took some Jamestown, Virginia, settlers on a whale-hunting voyage off the coast of Maine in 1614. Currently, no American citizens except for Native Alaskans are allowed to hunt whales without a permit issued under the Marine Mammal Protection Act of 1972.²

No history of America or the American economy would be complete without a discussion of whaling. Indeed, the first New Englanders depended on the whale for economic survival. Much of the Industrial Revolution worked on oils from sperm and right whales. The fashion industry both here and abroad used baleen—the long plates in the jaws of whales that are used to strain food from the ocean—for corsets, hoop skirts, and parasols, while the oils were used for soaps and perfumes. One of the great American novels, Herman Melville's Moby Dick, was based on New England whaling. For much of this chapter's history, the geographical focal points were Nantucket, Massachusetts, and New Bedford, Massachusetts. Nantucket ruled the industry from 1712-1823, and New Bedford from 1823-1925. For most of those two centuries, those ports ruled the world industry, as well.

Nantucketers started shore whaling about 1670. Twenty years later, the first

colonial newspaper was published in Boston, Massachusetts. It would take another 150 years before these two paths crossed. The site was New Bedford.

By 1843, New Bedford was well-established as the whaling capital of the world. That year, a window into that world was installed for the benefit of insiders and outsiders. The window was a newspaper called the Whalemen's Shipping List and Merchants' Transcript. At the time, newspapers devoted to business transactions just were emerging and mostly were devoted to commodities prices and shipping news. Eventually, business publications became a common feature in American journalism. Yet, in the entire history of the United States, there has been only one publication solely devoted to the whaling industry. That publication was the Whalemen's Shipping List and Merchants' Transcript, which debuted in 1843 under the guidance of 25-year-old Henry Lindsey, whose family also owned New Bedford's first daily newspaper—the Daily Mercury. Every week for the next 72 years, under four owners, the Whalemen's Shipping List and Merchants' Transcript chronicled the feasts and famines of the industry, the ups and downs of New Bedford, and the lives and deaths of whalemen. All this for the initial price of 6¢ per issue or \$1 per year.

So important was the newspaper's connection to the industry that it often was referred to as the bible of whaling.³ Its key feature was the shipping list, which contained all the American ships engaged in whaling. That list included a ship's name, tonnage, master, and agent; the date it sailed from port; its destination; its "date and place of last report" home; and the quantities of sperm oil, whale oil, and whalebone on board at the time of that last report. During the Golden Age of American whaling (1835 to about 1860), that list included up to 735 vessels and covered seven of the newspaper's eight pages.

Another feature of the newspaper was its market reports, which told readers how many barrels of sperm and whale oil, and how many pounds of whalebone, had been sold the previous week in New Bedford, New York City, and abroad, along with the prices

paid for those quantities. A typical sperm whale yielded 25 barrels of oil and a typical right whale yielded 60 barrels of oil. It has been estimated that baleen whales yield 8-10 pounds of whalebone for every barrel of oil. At the beginning of every year the newspaper summarized the previous year's business through a slew of statistical tables. These tables listed the quantities of oil and bone imported and exported; the average monthly price for those commodities; the number and tonnage of ships in the entire fleet; and the number of ships in the North Pacific whale fishery and their average catch. Prefacing these tables was a commentary that looked back on the previous year and ahead to the upcoming year.

But the Whalemen's Shipping List and Merchants' Transcript was much more than a collection of tables and statistics. Since its readership was spread around the globe, the newspaper was able to gather news from that readership. The main vehicle for this was an extensive correspondence network the newspaper had with U.S. diplomats, businessmen and whalemens abroad. This network regularly provided foreign news that was pertinent to whalers, such as treaties between the United States and foreign countries that opened markets to whalers, news of foreign laws that affected the industry, or general news that affected whalemens. Sometimes the newspaper editorialized on an issue, most often to defend whalemens or the industry against a perceived slight or to encourage whalemens to forge ahead even in the toughest times. For example, the newspaper in 1852 blasted New Bedford officials for replacing the whale oil used in street lamps with gas.⁴ As an industry newspaper, the Whalemen's Shipping List and Merchants' Transcript was hardly an objective observer. It had a vested interest in the success of the industry because no industry meant no newspaper. So, at the same time it reported on the crude oil bubbling from the Pennsylvania earth, it dismissed suggestions that oils from the ground were replacing oils from the whales.⁵

On the domestic front, the newspaper published news of court cases pertinent to the whaling and shipping industries; statistics on the United States and local economies,

including non-whaling commodities; and industry developments such as new whaling grounds, new equipment, and the introduction of steamers to the fleet. It also included the important general news of the day, much of it political, including elections and particularly the Civil War.

So, the Whalemen's Shipping List and Merchants' Transcript was like the Wall Street Journal of the whaling industry—it detailed the comings and goings, the ups and downs, the profits and the losses. Yet it also injected some humanity in between those business stories. The newspaper was equally as important to the families of whalemen as it was to the businessmen who paid those whalemen. Whalemen often sailed for three or four years at a time, so the newspaper was the best way for their families to keep track of their whereabouts and their hunting success. The newspaper kept the families informed by publishing excerpts from letters mailed by whalemen at sea. Those excerpts told of the latest catches, crew deaths, desertions, shipwrecks, mutinies, and encounters with “natives,” sea serpents and mermaids.

As the 19th century unraveled, the Whalemen's Shipping List and Merchants' Transcript informed its readers of those developments that ultimately caused the downfall of the industry. Underlying these developments, and amplifying their effects, was the gradual disappearance of the whales through overfishing. The slow but steady decline of the whaling industry caused a similar decline in the amount of whaling news. The Whalemen's Shipping List and Merchants' Transcript eventually filled its pages with fiction, poetry, jokes, riddles, and countless “believe-it-or-not” tales of the human and animal varieties. It also featured business and other news that had nothing to do with whaling. The Whalemen's Shipping List and Merchants' Transcript limped along, shrinking from eight pages to four pages to two pages as the whaling fleet shrank from 500 vessels to 400 to 300 to 200 to 100. The newspaper almost closed in 1889 but it was rescued by an employee and continued publishing for another 25 years, albeit as a shadow of its former self. By 1914, the entire United States whaling fleet consisted of 32

vessels, of which New Bedford had 21. Fifty-seven years earlier, New Bedford peaked at 329 vessels. The handwriting was on the wall. On December 29, 1914, the Whalemen's Shipping List and Merchants' Transcript, still just \$3.65 per year, published its last issue. "And a good journal goes the way of many a staunch old whaling bark," that last edition said. "It has outlived its usefulness, there is no demand for it..."

The purpose of this study is to document the rise and fall of the New Bedford whaling industry—which was, in effect, the American whaling industry—through the pages of the Whalemen's Shipping List and Merchants' Transcript. This analysis will proceed in the following ways.

First, this study will detail the origins of the American whaling industry and its development up to the first issue of the Whalemen's Shipping List and Merchants' Transcript on March 17, 1843. Man's first encounters with whales likely occurred thousands of years ago when coastal natives found the animals lying on the beach. The first organized, commercial hunts occurred in the 11th century when the Basques of western Europe harpooned right whales in the Bay of Biscay. Whaling developed in colonial America because many of those first settlers previously worked in the English and Dutch whaling fleets. This section also will include a history of New Bedford and its emergence as the world's leading whaling port.

Second, this study will place the appearance of the Whalemen's Shipping List and Merchants' Transcript in the context of the development of the American business press. This whaling newspaper, the only one ever published in the United States, emerged just as the American economy flourished through domestic expansion westward and overseas expansion in Europe and Asia. The Whalemen's Shipping List and Merchants' Transcript gathered its own information but it also depended heavily on other newspapers for information. These other newspapers were accessed through subscriptions and deliveries from abroad by whalemen returning to port. Reprinting articles from other newspapers was a common practice of the time before the development of the modern wire services.

Third, this study will examine the coverage by the Whalemen's Shipping List and Merchants' Transcript of the later years of whaling's Golden Age. This era, which began in 1835 and lasted until about 1860, saw whaling reach economic heights unprecedented in its earlier and later years. The scaling of those heights is what convinced Henry Lindsey in 1843 to start a whaling newspaper. During this Golden Age, the newspaper told of the increased demand for whale products, the discovery of new whaling grounds, the introduction of new weapons that increased the productivity of whalers, and the building of steam-powered ships that enabled whalers to reach their hunting grounds that much faster.

Finally, this study will examine the fall of the New Bedford and American whaling industry through the pages of the Whalemen's Shipping List and Merchants' Transcript. This fall resulted from a number of factors, including the striking of oil in northwestern Pennsylvania in 1859 and the rapid speed at which petroleum products replaced whale oils; the decimation of the whaling fleet during the Civil War by Confederate raids and Union sacrifices; and the incredible loss of life and ship at the hands of Arctic ice and cold. In the face of such devastating news, the newspaper often became a cheerleader for the industry and put on a happy face.

This study was conducted by reading virtually every issue the newspaper published during its 72 years. The first 59 years of the publication were available in original editions and the remaining 13 years were on microfilm. The original copies were examined at the John Hay Library of Brown University in Providence, Rhode Island, and at the Public Library in Providence, Rhode Island. The microfilm was examined at the Free Public Library in New Bedford, Massachusetts. The remaining research was conducted at the University of Rhode Island Library in Kingston, Rhode Island.

For this analysis, it is important to remember that the Whalemen's Shipping List and Merchants' Transcript covered New Bedford whaling like any newspaper would: in developing increments. It did not tell its readers that a particular event was part of the

“rise of whaling” or the “fall of whaling.” Rather, it just described the events as they occurred. Hindsight allows this author to put those individual pieces together to form the bigger picture. In order to do so, this study will quote extensively the words used by the Whalemen’s Shipping List and Merchants’ Transcript. In the interest of historical accuracy, those quotations will use the same spellings and punctuations used by the newspaper, even though they may differ from current practice. The compilation of statistics was a central function of the Whalemen’s Shipping List and Merchants’ Transcript and this study will depend heavily on those statistics. An appendix contains several statistical tables arranged to cover the course of the newspaper’s life. Finally, this study will refer to the newspaper as the Whalemen’s Shipping List for brevity’s sake.

CHAPTER 1

ORIGINS OF AMERICAN WHALING

The First Whalemen

Interaction between humans and whales likely began several thousands of years ago when primitive coastal dwellers discovered a stranded whale on the beach. From earliest times, aboriginal peoples used stranded whales and other cetaceans, including dolphins and porpoises, for food and other purposes.⁶ Sometime later, primitive man, surely motivated by the tons of food provided by whales, decided to go to the whales rather than wait for the whales to come to him. The hunting of whales commenced as early as about 1500 B.C., when Native Alaskans used their catch for food, clothing and tools.⁷ Primitive peoples of Arctic North America hunted the Arctic right whale, those along the Pacific Ocean hunted the gray whale and those along the Atlantic Ocean hunted gray and humpback whales.

These primitive whalers paddled to sea in dugout canoes or skin boats until they came close enough to a whale to throw a harpoon, made of bone or flint, with a skin float attached. If the harpoon hit its target, these whalers followed the float and plunged even more harpoons into the prey until, finally, it bled to death. The task of bringing the whale to shore could take days but the food it provided could last months. Because the hunt was so difficult and so dangerous, any whaling community that killed more than one whale a year could be considered very successful hunters. Thus, early man posed no real threat to the continuing survival of the whale nation.⁸

Whaling by coastal peoples continued on a small scale for several centuries. Its greatest proponents were the Norsemen who roamed the North Atlantic Ocean exploring new lands, including North America. These waters were full of whales—beluga, fin, humpback, narwhal, pilot, right, and sperm—so even though Norse sagas do not mention whaling, it is believed the Norsemen partook in this bounty. About 890 A.D., King Alfred of Wessex, also known as Alfred the Great, published a tale by a Norseman

named Ochther describing whaling voyages off the Norwegian coast. On these voyages, men in boats herded whales into the fjords to be slaughtered. The oil was used for lighting and the baleen for building boats and making jewelry. However, these hunts did not develop into a regular fishery.⁹

The first organized, commercial whale hunts were conducted in the 11th century by the Basques of western Europe, who harpooned black right whales in the coastal waters of the Bay of Biscay.¹⁰ This predated Japanese shore whaling by about four centuries. The Basques, who likely learned their trade from the Norsemen, commenced hunting because the whales interfered with fishing nets in bay waters. After meeting their own needs for meat and blubber, the Basques sold what was left through markets visited by people from across Europe, including Denmark, England, France and Holland. Virtually the entire whale was used: the blubber, meat and even the tongue—considered a delicacy for royalty and clergy—were eaten; the oil was used in lights, soap, and paint; the baleen was used in plumes on knights' helmets; the vertebrae were put into seats; and the ribs were used as housing beams and fence pickets.¹¹ The whale had been transformed from a creature of subsistence value to a creature of commercial value.

As the coastal whale populations decreased, the Basques ventured further offshore and established the first pelagic, or open ocean, commercial whaling operations. But the black right whales soon became harder to find because of overfishing or a move by the whales to safer breeding grounds, or a combination of both. The Basques were forced to whale elsewhere and, by the 14th century, had sailed the North Atlantic to Greenland, Iceland, Ireland, Labrador and Newfoundland. From 1530 to 1610, the Basques may have killed up to 40,000 right whales, according to a 1985 estimate by the International Whaling Commission. By 1578 there were about 30 Basque vessels sailing from the Red Bay region of Newfoundland every season. The Basques' hunting prowess was such that they have been linked with the extinction of the Atlantic gray whale—the first cetacean extinction in recorded history. The Basques, who were the European leaders in whaling

from the 11th to 17th centuries, “became the paradigms of the whaling industry, establishing the *modus operandi* that would characterize the industry for another thousand years...They discovered the ‘resource,’ exploited it, and then pursued it so vigorously that it was uneconomical to continue.”¹²

It was at the turn of the 17th century that the British and Dutch entered the whaling business with the crucial assistance of the Basques. This was significant for the future American industry because many of the early American whalers learned their trade aboard British and Dutch vessels. In 1596, Willem Barendsz, piloting a Dutch ship, discovered Spitsbergen and the bowhead whaling grounds in the Greenland Sea. In 1607, Henry Hudson of the London-based Muscovy Company unsuccessfully attempted to reach China by sailing through the North Pole. Upon his return he told of plentiful whales in the Greenland Sea. Almost immediately thereafter, the Basques, British, Dutch and Germans sent whaling fleets to the region. The Basques could not compete with the naval superiority of the British and Dutch so they put their five centuries of whaling experience to use on board the British and Dutch vessels. The Muscovy Company sent the first British whaling expedition to Spitsbergen in 1610 with Basque harpooners. The Dutch became the preeminent whalers for the next century through the knowledge gained from the Basques, better ships, military domination of the British, more efficient whaling techniques, and the building of a whaling station on Spitsbergen Island. Whale oil was a critical commodity in urbanizing Europe so whalers flocked to the Spitsbergen and Greenland Sea whaling grounds. By the 18th century, the whales were disappearing so the remaining fleets looked to the west for new grounds. One of the most fertile areas lay off the coast of North America, where the first colonists began whaling in the early 17th century.

The First American Whalers

The Native American peoples along the North American coasts surely encountered whales before European explorers and settlers sailed to America. These first

encounters with beached whales eventually led to organized offshore hunts. "...[I]t is known that the Indians had quite a passion for hunting the whale, or *powdawe* as they called it. The Montauk Indians regarded the fin or tail of a whale as a rare sacrifice to their deity."¹³ British Capt. George Waymouth's journal of a 1605 voyage to America described Native Americans using a "multitude of their boats" in pursuit of a whale. In 1607, the first European settlers landed in America in what is now Jamestown, Virginia. Capt. John Smith, leader of those settlers, is credited with organizing the first whaling voyage to New England in 1614, most likely because of the whales he saw during his voyages. Smith took two ships to Monhegan Island off the coast of Maine: "Our plot was there to take Whales...we saw many and spent much time in chasing them, but could not kill any."¹⁴ In December 1620, the Pilgrims landed at Plymouth after sailing through waters filled with black whales, according to several accounts.¹⁵ By this time, the Spitsbergen whale fishery had been well established by the British and Dutch, and it is believed that some of the colonists aboard the Mayflower had been employed in that fishery.¹⁶

The history of American whaling...may be said to begin almost with the settlement of the New England colonies, though several decades elapsed before it appears to have become a regular or at all important pursuit. It is quite probable, however, that some attempts at whaling were made before the time of any recorded account now available.¹⁷

The presence of whales indicated fertile fishing grounds, so the colonists remained in Plymouth instead of moving farther inland. The importance of fishing to the colonists can be concluded from the Royal Charter of Massachusetts, drawn up in 1629, which protected the rights of residents to pursue "all fishes—royal fishes, whales, balan, sturgeons, and other fishes" without restriction. Also, in 1639, Massachusetts promoted fisheries by giving seven-year exemptions from all duties and taxes to those vessels involved in catching or transporting fish.

The early colonies all devised plans to deal with drift whales, that is, whales that came ashore through beachings and strandings. For example, Massachusetts Bay and

Plymouth decreed that one-third of a drift whale was awarded to the finder, one-third to the town, and one-third to the colonial government.¹⁸ Most of the whales in the adjacent seas were humpback, right and sperm whales.

When it came to offshore whaling, New Englanders were beaten to the seas by residents of Southampton on the southeastern shore of Long Island. That town was settled by former residents of Lynn, Massachusetts, in 1640. Four years later, the town was divided into four wards and residents of those four wards were entitled to a share of any drift whale in their ward. Shortly thereafter, residents ventured to the sea to hunt whales. "It is probably safe to assert that the first organized prosecution of the American whale-fishery was made along the shores of Long Island. The town of Southampton...was quick to appreciate the value of this source of revenue."¹⁹ Although there is no known record of the very first voyage, the Long Island towns of Easthampton, Southampton and Southwold said in a 1672 memorial to the court at Whitehall, New York, that their residents had been involved in the whale fishery for 20 years. That would date the first expeditions to at least 1652. Also in 1652, a letter written by the directors of the Dutch West India Company to Peter Stuyvesant in New York mentioned the possibility that "the whale fishery...might be taken in hand during some part of the year."²⁰ The objects of these hunts were either humpback or right whales, most likely the latter.

The Nantucket Whalers

New Englanders began shore whaling in about 1670 on the island of Nantucket off the coast of mainland Massachusetts. The island had been settled just 12 years earlier by refugees from Puritan oppression on the mainland. An 1836 history of Nantucket by Obed Macy said the island's poor soil forced those settlers to depend on the sea for nourishment. One day, a right whale appeared in the harbor and stayed for three days. The residents quickly fashioned harpoons, set out in boats and killed the whale. "This first success encouraged them to undertake whaling as a permanent business; whales being at that time numerous in the vicinity of the shores."²¹ The targets likely were right

whales since they were prevalent in Cape Cod Bay at that time. Whaling fever spread rapidly through the island and in 1672 residents hired two men to operate whaling businesses on the island.

The island did not make any real strides in whaling until 1690, when it hired Ichabod Paddock of Cape Cod, in what is now Massachusetts, to organize its shore whaling efforts. At that time, Cape Cod was more successful at whaling than Nantucket. Paddock began building boats, erecting tryworks—in which the blubber was placed in an iron caldron and then the caldron atop a brick oven, where the blubber was boiled to extract the oil—on the shore, and, taking a page from Native Americans, placing watchtowers on shore for lookouts. By 1694, Nantucket had launched its first pelagic whaling vessel. These measures improved Nantucket's fishery to such a degree that it was the leading whaling port in the colonies by the turn of the 18th century. "Whales were so plentiful about the shores that at first the islanders secured all the oil they desired without venturing out of sight of land."²²

The colonists used whale products frequently during their everyday lives. For example, the whale oil was used in lamps, the leather tanning process, heating, and the lubrication of primitive machinery. Whale fat was used to make candles and soaps. Whalebone, or baleen, taken from the jaws was heated and shaped for a multitude of uses typically associated with fashion. In Europe, whalebone was used as supports for corsets, hoop petticoats, and umbrellas, among other things. Fashion was not an important issue in the colonies so much of the whalebone made its way to Europe. Colonists eventually used whalebone for making trunks, fishing rods, whips, hair brushes, shoehorns, police billies, and even carriage wheels. The hair often found on the bone was used in upholstery. "On the whole, the uses of whale products are few in number, but each has thus far held a place which nothing else could fill."²³

By 1700, residents of Cape Cod, Nantucket, Long Island and New Jersey were whaling. A dozen years later, Nantucket began its march to the top of the world whaling

industry through nature's guidance. In 1712, Capt. Christopher Hussey was off the Nantucket coast when a storm blew his whaling sloop out into the Gulf Stream. Hussey soon was surrounded by a school of sperm whales and managed to catch one.²⁴ This was the first recorded catch of a sperm whale in colonial history, although intentions to catch sperm whales were known in Boston, Massachusetts, as early as 1688. Hussey's catch triggered a whaling rush similar in nature to the gold rushes of the 19th century and Nantucket rocketed to the fore of the whaling industry, where it remained for more than a century.

The sperm whale was significant for the oil, or spermaceti, found in its case, a membrane-lined reservoir in the whale's nose. More spermaceti was found below the case in a spongy substance called junk. Spermaceti solidified when exposed to air and it is believed that a Rhode Islander named Jacob Rodriguez Rivera in 1750 first conceived of using the oil to make candles. The highest-quality oil—that squeezed from the whale's head—was used in lamps, while the remainder was used to make candles, give a gloss to linen in the laundry, and treat illnesses. At this time, candles were the primary sources of indoor lighting. Before the use of spermaceti, candles typically were made from wax or tallow, a melted fat from cattle and sheep, that created acrid, black smoke when burned. The spermaceti candles, on the other hand, burned smokeless and odorless. This higher quality led to a higher price, so the sperm whale rush was on. By 1761, six candle-works using spermaceti were established in Newport, Rhode Island, along with one each in Providence, Rhode Island; Boston, Massachusetts; and Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. The first candle-works in Nantucket was established in 1772. Another was erected in New Bedford about the same time. By 1791, the United States exported 182,400 pounds of spermaceti candles to Africa, Bahama, Bermuda, Britain, southern Europe, Ireland, Newfoundland, and the West Indies.²⁵

Another product of the sperm whale was ambergris, a grayish, peat-like substance found in the animal's intestines. Ambergris was used in headache remedies, wines,

cosmetics and, most popularly, perfumes. Its popularity was such that it often was worth its weight in gold.

The importance of the sperm whale to the development of the American whale fishery can be seen in the statistics contained in newspapers of the period.²⁶

Table 1.--Results of Early Years of American Sperm Whale Fishery from Nantucket

Year	Vessels	Avg. Weight (Tons)	Total Catch (Barrels)†	Value Per Ton (£ Sterling)	Total Value (£ Sterling)
1715	6	30-40	600	NA	1,100
1730	25	38-50	3,700	7	3,200
1748	60	50-75	11,250	14	19,684
1756	80	75	12,000	18	27,600
1768	125	75	15,439	NA	70,000

†1 barrel = 31.5 gallons.

During this period of rapid growth, whalers changed their processing techniques and, as a result, revolutionized the industry. By the mid-18th century, whalers ventured offshore but only far enough to make a quick return to the onshore tryworks when their casks were filled with blubber. Such a return was necessary to prevent blubber spoilage, oil seepage, and the creation of an awful stench on board. As the industry grew, fewer whales were found offshore so whalers took longer voyages in the open ocean. To accommodate these longer voyages, the tryworks were moved from shore to ship sometime around 1750. This turn of events ushered in “the most eventful era to the whale-fishery that it has ever passed through,” lasting until 1784.²⁷

In 1756, 80 whaling vessels sailed from Nantucket, returning home with a total of 12,000 barrels of oil valued at £18 per ton for a total value of £27,600. The catch undoubtedly would have been larger but at least nine ships were captured by the French during the Seven Years’ War. This war, which lasted until 1763, was just one of the many outside events that interfered with New England whaling during the 18th century. Those events included attacks by French and Spanish privateers, duties imposed by Britain on colonial exports, and bounties offered to British whalers to resurrect their fleet.

On the positive side, the end of the war saw France surrender her claims to Canada, which paved the way for New England whalers to hunt the waters of the Gulf of St. Lawrence and the Straits of Belle Isle.

Nantucket maintained its dominance of the world whaling industry through the 18th century and the first quarter of the 19th century, while other ports like Martha's Vineyard and Salem in Massachusetts; Newport, Providence, Tiverton and Warren in Rhode Island; New London in Connecticut; and Sag Harbor in Long Island supported smaller whaling fleets.

The New Bedford Whalemens

However, Nantucket's dominance ultimately was ended by a small, harborfront town on the Massachusetts mainland originally known as Dartmouth but later named New Bedford. The hamlet was settled in 1652 when Capt. Myles Standish and others bought 34 acres along the Acushnet River from the Native Americans. The early settlers, many of whom were Quakers, surely must have seen whales in the harbor and, occasionally, on the shore. By the mid-18th century, the village developed a small fishing industry through the efforts of boatbuilders John Loudon, Joseph Russell and Benjamin Taber. Precisely when the village began offshore whaling is unknown, but Russell generally is considered the pioneer of the area's whaling industry. Various histories of New Bedford set different dates for Russell's entry into the industry, with the earliest date being sometime around 1750.²⁸

...[V]ery little thought is given to the start of the business which a century later brought fame and wealth alike to the old port. In fact, even historians are somewhat shady as to just how it first came about... Truth is, there has never been much information on the point...²⁹

The earliest known record of a Dartmouth whaling voyage dates to 1756. An excerpt published in the Whalemens Shipping List on May 7, 1901, said the unidentified sloop was captained by John Taber and traveled offshore the distance of a two-day sail. During his 24-day cruise, Taber struck six whales, found three more and stowed away the

blubber of three. The next known record of a whaling voyage from Dartmouth was by the sloop Betsey. The date of Betsey's departure was unknown but the recovered portion of its log began on July 27, 1761, and told of a hunt for sperm whales. Betsey sailed again in 1762 and in September the crew knocked down some shore tryworks, most likely because on-board tryworks had become routine. By 1765, four sloops left Dartmouth for whale grounds off the Virginia coast.

That year marked a turning point in American whaling history because it was then that Joseph Rotch, Nantucket's most prominent whaling merchant, moved to the mainland in search of a deep-water harbor for his operations. He eventually bought a 10-acre patch of land in Dartmouth and, along with Russell and the others, set out to build a whaling industry. Rotch named the place New Bedford after the Dukes of Bedford, whose surname was Russell. Within 10 years the settlers cleared roads, put up houses, built ships "and fully launched a village founded on the premise of a whaling New Bedford..."³⁰

During this period, from the 1750s to the 1770s, Nantucket and New Bedford whalers considerably expanded their hunting grounds.³¹ In 1751 they reached the Island of Disco, in 1761 the Gulf of St. Lawrence, in 1763 the coast of Guinea, in 1765 the Western Islands (Azores), in 1773 the western coast of Africa, and in 1774 the coast of Brazil. Still, the most popular whaling grounds were the Grand Banks, the Gulf Stream and the Bahamas. In 1768, Nantucket launched 80 vessels, with another 80 collectively launched by Boston, Cape Cod and Dartmouth in Massachusetts and Newport, Providence and Warren in Rhode Island. The fleet returned with about 21,000 barrels of oil worth £18 per ton for a total value of £47,200, or \$236,000.

Before long, New Bedford nipped at the heels of Nantucket's whaling dominance. In 1760 it sent its first whalers south and by 1770 it launched two ships across the Atlantic. In 1775, Nantucket launched 150 whaling vessels that weighed a total of 15,075 tons and employed 2,025 seamen. That same year, New Bedford launched 80 vessels that

weighed 6,500 tons and employed 1,040 seamen. Nantucket ships came back with 26,000 barrels of sperm oil and 4,000 barrels of whale oil (namely from right whales), while New Bedford ships came back with 7,200 and 1,400, respectively. The entire colonial fishery at this time consisted of about 360 vessels that weighed a combined 33,000 tons and employed 4,700 seamen. The annual catch was about 45,000 barrels of spermaceti, 8,500 barrels of whale oil, and about 75,000 pounds of bone.³²

Much of the spermaceti was sent to Britain, while whale oil was sent to Boston for shipment inland or to such foreign ports as the West Indies. During this time, more than 90% of the oil used by Britain came from the colonies. Likewise, much of the whalebone used by Europe came from the colonies. So when tensions developed between Britain and her colonies, the mother country tried to revitalize her whaling industry. The British Parliament gave tax exemptions to ships whaling in the Gulf of St. Lawrence and bonuses to the five ships with the largest cargoes. It also imposed duties on the oil and bone exported by the colonists, limited those exports to British ports, and banned fishery activities by the colonies off the North American coast “to starve New England.” These restrictive measures were opposed not only by the colonists, but also by the British businessmen who depended on the flow of spermaceti, whale oil and whalebone. The expertise of colonial whalers was heralded by Edmund Burke during a 1775 speech before the House of Commons supporting conciliation with the colonies:

...[L]ook at the manner in which the New England people carry on the whale fishery...No sea but what is vexed by their fisheries; no climate that is not witness to their toil. Neither the perseverance of Holland, nor the activity of France, nor the dexterous and firm sagacity of English enterprise, ever carried this most perilous mode of hardy industry to the extent to which it has been pursued by this recent people—a people who are still in the gristle, and not yet hardened into manhood.³³

The tensions ultimately led to the American Revolution. It is outside the scope of this paper to probe the causes and effects of the the American Revolution of 1775-1783. It is sufficient to say that “[w]ith the advent of the American Revolution came the death of the whaling industry, not only in Dartmouth, but in all the New England towns that

had been engaged in it.”³⁴ The British measures had a domino effect: they not only harmed the whalers and shipowners, but also shipbuilders, coopers, ropemakers, blacksmiths, carpenters, and anyone else whose livelihood was associated with whaling.

The bells that called the hardy yeomanry of New England to the defense of their imperiled liberties...rung the death knell of the whale fishery, save that carried on from Nantucket; the rattle of musketry was the funeral volley over its grave. Save from this solitary island, it was doomed to annihilation.³⁵

The reasons for this were clear: it simply was too dangerous for whalers on the high seas, and all available manpower was needed in the fight for independence. At the same time, British attacks on New England ports—including Warren, Rhode Island; Dartmouth, Martha’s Vineyard, and Nantucket, Massachusetts—and on ships sailing the high seas decimated the colonial fleet. In 1778, the British raided New Bedford Harbor and destroyed 70 vessels and 26 storehouses. The wrecks sank in the river mud and posed navigational hazards for years. This attack crippled the port and forced it to cease whaling until the war was over.

Despite these hostilities, Nantucket had no alternative but to continue whaling. The island virtually was barren of crops, so the 6,000 residents depended on the seas to put food on their tables. The island had 140 vessels in port at the time of the American Revolution: 132 were involved in the whale fishery and the remaining eight imported other provisions. The business had to be carried on or the island would have been abandoned. So Nantucket sided with the British during the war in order to keep its markets open. Some Nantucketers moved to New York to start a whale fishery, but most stayed on the island. The Whalers’ Shipping List of June 22, 1852, said the catch during the last season before British attacks was 30,000 barrels of oil and 160 tons of spermaceti candles. However, most of that cargo piled up on shore and went to waste because there was no place to sell it: sailing under American protection brought attacks by the British, and vice versa. Nantucketers even tried to elude colonial bans on trading with the enemy by planning to ship the oil and bone to the Falkland Islands, where it

would then be sold to the British without identifying the source of the products. Samuel Adams learned of the plot and sent John Paul Jones to capture the Nantucket ships. Undaunted, Nantucketers continued whaling, mainly for subsistence purposes, and received a small break in 1781 when the British admiral in New York allowed them to launch 24 vessels and assured them immunity from British attacks on the high seas. Even so, the island barely made it through the war. In 1775, it launched about 150 ships. During the war, 134 were captured by the British and another 15 had shipwrecked. About 1,200 seamen died or were captured by the British and financial losses totaled more than \$1 million at a time when the average pay was 67¢ a day. By the end of the war, the American whaling industry was headed for extinction.

The industry which eight years before had been enjoying the highest tide of its prosperity was now so completely destroyed that hardly a vestige remained. At the same time an almost total suspension of imports of whaling products had led to the widespread use of substitutes—one of the hardest factors with which the revived industry would have to contend in re-establishing the former demand and general consumption.³⁶

Peace brought a new vitality to the industry. The break provided by the American Revolution gave the whales a chance to recover and whalers rushed to the seas: “The Revolutionary War put a stop to all whaling but the same voyages were renewed immediately after the Peace....,” the Whalemen’s Shipping List said September 14, 1852. High prices led to larger kills, which led to a glut of product and a subsequent plunge in prices. Britain remained the main market for spermaceti, yet a duty of £18 sterling per ton effectively closed that market and forced the industry to its knees. From 1784-1787, no whaling vessels sailed from either Nantucket or New Bedford. So Nantucketers took matters into their own hands and founded whaling stations where they believed they could sell their products. Between 1785 and 1792, they set up shop in Nova Scotia; the Falkland Islands; Milford Haven, Britain; and Dunkirk, France, among other places. This expansion created a familiar cycle that plagued whaling since its early days. The expansion of hunting grounds ultimately led to a scarcity of whales in those grounds,

which triggered a search for newer grounds and, eventually, a scarcity of whales there. The vessels also became larger to accommodate the longer voyages and thus required more whale products to break even. Until the mid-1770s, colonial whaling was limited to the waters of the North Atlantic Ocean. By 1791, a scarcity of whales sent seven vessels—six from Nantucket and one from New Bedford—to the Pacific Ocean off the coast of South America. The Whalemen's Shipping List said on June 22, 1852, that the scarcity of whales off the coast of Brazil sent “the enterprising people of Nantucket” to the Pacific Ocean, where they understood from the voyages of captains Vancouver and Cook “that the whales were to be found in great abundance... These adventurous voyages were attended with success, and have been increasing ever since...” In 1793, the first American whaler completed a round trip between New Bedford and the Pacific Ocean—via Cape Horn—with a cargo of sperm oil. This expansion continued into the next century as vessels sailed in 1820 to Japan and in 1848 to the Arctic Ocean through the Bering Strait.

The industry alternately peaked and plummeted during the last decade of the 18th century and the first decade of the 19th century. These erratic conditions resulted from the inability of Britain, France, Spain and the United States to make a lasting peace among themselves. The outbreak of the French Revolution in 1792 effectively closed that market. Whalebone plummeted to 10¢ per pound, a decrease of 90¢ since the outbreak of the American Revolution, and oil sold for less than the cost of production. This forced many American shipowners to bail out of whaling and turn to the more lucrative business of carrying cargo for Europe. In 1798, the buildup of hostilities between France and the United States further burdened whalers since French privateers were capturing American whaleships. This triggered another selling spree by businessmen on the verge of ruin. In 1800, the Spanish authorities at Valparaiso, Chile, seized several American whaleships. Then the War of 1812 erupted through a series of events including American attempts to run British naval blockades of France during the Napoleonic Wars. Again, the whalers

suffered from an embargo on the export of goods to Britain. Whaling ships already out on several-year voyages were captured and every American port except Nantucket shut down during the war. New Bedford was closed and a British ship was stationed just outside the harbor to make sure it stayed that way. Immediately after the outbreak of war, eight New Bedford ships—worth almost \$220,000 with cargo—were captured on the high seas by the enemy. Seizures of American vessels also occurred off the Peruvian coast. Nantucket was a shell of its former self and launched just 10 vessels in 1812, two in 1813, and none in 1814. When the war began, Nantucket owned 46 vessels. When the war ended, it owned 23. All told, the American whaling fleet declined from about 360 vessels in 1775 to no more than 200 anytime between 1785 and 1815.

Through four decades the American whale fishery had lived a precarious existence of constant ups and downs. Foreign wars, unsettled conditions at home, restricted markets and unnatural stimulation had kept the business in a continual state of uncertainty...[A]t no time in the thirty years from 1785 to 1815 were the conditions stable long enough for the fishery to resume its former importance...But from the ruins a whale fishery was to grow up, slowly and steadily, during the next three decades, of such importance and prosperity as no other time or country has ever seen.³⁷

Again, the coming of peace revitalized the whaling industry. American vessels captured by the British and pressed into service were recaptured by Americans. Those actions crippled the British industry and opened a huge overseas market for the Americans. The domestic market also expanded as the Industrial Revolution began. “The wharves, lately so deserted, teemed with life; the ships, lately dismantled, put on their new dress; the faces of the people, lately so disconsolate, were radiant with hope.”³⁸ Not only did existing ports send out more ships, but more ports were created and their ships explored more uncharted territory than ever before. By 1819, the first American whalers reached Hawaii. After a three-year layoff, New Bedford launched 10 vessels in 1815, while Nantucket launched 50. What ensued was a period of great competition between the two ports for whaling supremacy. By 1821, New Bedford had surpassed Nantucket by a count of 39 vessels to 34. “From that time to the present, the whale fishery has gone on

rapidly increasing, until it has now become a great branch of national industry,” the Whalemen’s Shipping List said on September 14, 1852.

The emergence of New Bedford as the leading American whaling port and the subsequent decline of Nantucket cannot be explained easily. One historian cited the faltering of Quaker rule on the island from the 1820s to 1830s as the cause of the decline.

As the Society of Friends lost its power, so did that driving spirit of the sea-hunters falter. For Quakerism, the sea, and whaling had become fused into a single spirit. Once one element began to die (although the end of all influence of the three was not yet), the others began to reveal evidences of final conclusion.³⁹

Surely, the lack of sufficient infrastructure compared with New Bedford played a major role in Nantucket’s decline. Yet New Bedford had no obvious advantages over other ports: it was not closer to the whaling grounds, it did not have better facilities, it had no railroad, and it did not have a diverse maritime industry. Since the early 1700s, Nantucket, through war and peace, had been the whaling capital of the world. Then its geographical isolation and poor natural resources slowly worked against it. The move by Joseph Rotch to New Bedford in 1750 was spurred by his desire to operate from a mainland port with abundant natural resources. As New Bedford’s whaling industry developed, more entrepreneurs moved there. This growing expertise attracted even more entrepreneurs and the tradesmen required to support the industry. Success infused the port with more capital for expansion. “It seems safe to assert that no other industry so widespread in its operation has been so closely restricted in the places from which it was carried on...And the center of all from 1820 onward was at New Bedford.”⁴⁰

There was a rapid expansion in the American whale fishery starting in 1820. The 1820s brought new wealth to the United States and with it came an increased demand for whale products. Also, the building of lighthouses increased the demand for whale oil. Prior to 1820, American imports of sperm oil were *greater than* 1 million gallons just once—in 1817, according to United States government figures. Beginning in 1820 and lasting until 1881, those imports were *less than* 1 million gallons just once—in 1826.

Likewise for whale oil. Imports were *greater than* 1 million gallons just once prior to 1820. From 1820 to 1877, those imports were *less than* 1 million gallons just once—in 1872. Also, the tonnage of vessels in the whaling fleet increased from 35,391 in 1820 to 57,284 in 1829.

During the 1830s, whaling entered what has been referred to as its Golden Age. The reasons behind this will be discussed later. During this period, imports reached unprecedented amounts—such as the 1837 sperm oil catch of 5,329,138 gallons, a figure never reached again. The price of sperm oil steadily rose through the decade from about 66¢ per gallon in 1830 to \$1.05 in 1839. The revenues of the American industry—based on the sales of sperm oil, whale oil, and whalebone—increased from about \$3.5 million in 1830 to \$7.5 million in 1839. The tonnage of American vessels increased from 38,912 in 1830 to 119,630 in 1839. During this decade, most whaling occurred in the Pacific Ocean, particularly after the 1835 discovery of the right whale habitat in the North Pacific. Whalers from New Bedford; New London, Connecticut; and Sag Harbor, New York, exploited these new grounds with such success that by 1890 the North Pacific right whale was decimated. Meanwhile, Nantucket whalers concentrated on the older hunting grounds and thus suffered with the similar decline in whale populations there. By 1835, the number of whaling ports in the United States increased to about 30, compared with six in 1820. Those new ports included Portland, Maine; Portsmouth, New Hampshire; Fall River, Massachusetts; Bridgeport, Connecticut; Poughkeepsie, New York; and Newark, New Jersey, among others. However, these ports only maintained small operations while Nantucket and New Bedford continued to dominate the fishery.

So it was that by the 1840s, New Bedford's dominance of the American whale fishery was complete. On January 1, 1844, the American fleet numbered 644 vessels, of which 219, or 34%, sailed from New Bedford. The total tonnage of the American fleet was 200,484, of which 69,803 tons, or 35%, belonged to New Bedford.⁴¹ New Bedford was the fourth-largest port in the United States behind New York City; Boston; and New

Orleans, Louisiana. Yet New Bedford's population in 1840 was about 12,100, just about 5% of that of New York City. This prosperity inspired the 25-year-old son of the founder of the New Bedford Daily Mercury to start a business paper in 1843 solely devoted to the whaling industry. For the next 72 years, the Whalemen's Shipping List and Merchants' Transcript was required reading for whalers, shipowners, craftsmen involved in the industry, and families and friends of those whalers out on years-long voyages. "The 'Shipping List' is without question the best single source of information regarding the condition of the industry since 1845. Its files are a veritable mine of valuable facts and suggestions. Its publication of statistics concerning the whale fishery is alone ample justification for its existence."⁴²

CHAPTER 2

THE AMERICAN BUSINESS PRESS AND WHALING

Early History of the Business Press

The concept of writing down the particulars of business transactions originated with the Egyptians circa 5000 B.C.⁴³ Stone was the medium of choice and hieroglyphics the method of writing. By September 25, 1690, paper was the medium and printing press the method. That date marked the publication by Benjamin Harris in Boston, Massachusetts, of the first colonial newspaper. Publick Occurrences Both Forreign and Domestick was intended to be “furnished once a moneth (or if any Glut of Occurrences happen, oftener).”⁴⁴ However, Harris did not obtain a license from the Massachusetts colonial government to print his four-page newspaper, so the press was shut down and the newspaper never appeared again. This unlawful act fathered the American press.

The first continuously published newspaper in the colonies was the News-Letter of Boston, which debuted on April 24, 1704. By 1750, there were 12 newspapers in the colonies. It was about this time that the first newspaper devoted to business news appeared in North America. Europe supported a business press since at least 1585. Those first sheets in England, Germany, Holland and Italy were known as price-currents and they solely consisted of lists of commodities sold on the market and the wholesale prices of those commodities. For example, Dutch price-currents included rice, fruit, oils, dyes, and cotton, among others. These publications, which were edited by commodity brokers and commission merchants, also contained basic shipping information so merchants could keep tabs on the import and export markets.

The first price-current in North America appeared in Nova Scotia in 1752. The earliest known price-current in the colonies appeared in 1774 as the South-Carolina Price-Current. During the next 30 years, eight such publications appeared in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania; three in New York City; and one each in Boston and Baltimore, Maryland. Those cities, appropriately enough, were the major ports of the time.

The subsequent expansion of the United States economy was carried out in large part by shipping, so it was natural that the second phase of business journalism involved shipping lists. These publications, which first appeared in New York in 1810, listed the ships docked on the waterfront and itemized the cargoes they carried. These newspapers also contained stock prices, postage rates and insurance rates. The only other city to publish shipping lists was Boston because these two cities were the top ports in the country. The first shipping list in Boston was the Marine Telegraphic Shipping List, which lasted about four months in 1826. The second was the Boston Shipping List, Prices Current, Commercial and Underwriters' Gazette, which debuted in 1843 and lasted until 1886. These business publications thrived because the westward expansion of the United States continually created new markets for goods. Eventually, newspapers were created to follow banking, printing, railroads, and mining and metalworking. Usually, the competition within these journalistic fields was intense. Yet, in the centuries-long histories of both American journalism and the American whaling industry, there was only one marriage between the two: the Whalemen's Shipping List and Merchants' Transcript. So important was this publication to the industry that it was referred to as "the bible."

The Whalemen's Shipping List sprang from the Lindsey family of Marblehead, Massachusetts. Benjamin Lindsey (1777-1831) was the compositing room foreman at the New-England Palladium in Boston when he moved to New Bedford to start his own weekly newspaper. The New Bedford Mercury debuted August 7, 1807, and was the third weekly published in the village. Dartmouth and New Bedford had a brief newspaper history at that time. The area's first newspaper was the Marine Journal, started by bookseller John Spooner in 1792. It lasted but a few years. The second newspaper was the Columbian Courier, which debuted in 1798 and lasted until 1805. Three years after the Courier's demise, the Old Colony Gazette appeared, lasting until 1823.⁴⁵

The Mercury, with a subscription price of \$2 per year, adopted a Federalist line and soon became one of the most respected newspapers in Massachusetts.⁴⁶ In 1826,

Lindsey was joined at the paper by his son, Benjamin Lindsey, Jr. (1807-1889). Five years later, the Lindseys converted the Mercury into New Bedford's first daily newspaper, the Daily Mercury. At that time, there were about 1,300 newspapers, both daily and weekly, published in the United States.⁴⁷ By 1840, Massachusetts was home to 10 daily newspapers and 81 weekly publications. Benjamin Lindsey, Jr., took over the paper after his father's death in November 1831 and ultimately sold it in 1876. Benjamin Lindsey, Jr., at some point was joined in the operations of the newspaper by his younger brother, Henry (1818-1853), and the two became co-editors.⁴⁸ Henry Lindsey managed the printing operations while his brother managed the editorial operations.

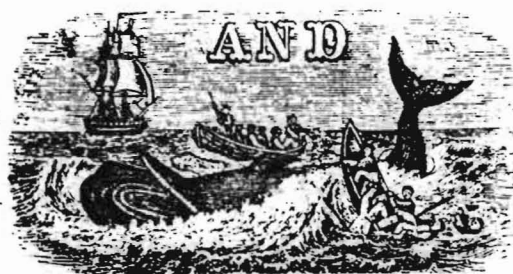
By 1843, New Bedford was the undisputed champion of the world whaling industry. As stated earlier, New Bedford was the fourth-largest port in the United States at that time. The entire United States whaling fleet, as of March 17, 1843, comprised 643 vessels, of which 214, or 33%, sailed from New Bedford.⁴⁹ Total industry revenues in 1843 from the sales of spermaceti, whale oil, and whalebone were about \$6.3 million. Like a good businessman, Henry Lindsey recognized an opportunity and took advantage of it.

The Whaling Paper Debuts

The Whalemen's Shipping List and Merchants' Transcript made its first appearance on Friday morning, March 17, 1843 (*see Figure 1*). That first issue was eight pages long, of which seven-and-a-half pages were occupied by a shipping list. That list included columns, in order from left to right, containing a vessel's name, its tonnage, its master, its agent, the date it sailed from port, its destination, the "date and place of last report" home, and the amount of oil on board at the time of that report. This list was broken up by port, with New Bedford at the top of the list. In that inaugural issue, the largest ship was the Orozimbo at 588 tons. She sailed from New Bedford on December 7, 1840, bound for the North Pacific Ocean. Her last report on December 10, 1842, said she had 480 barrels of sperm oil and 3,200 barrels of whale oil. The ship on the longest

WHALEMEN'S SHIPPING LIST, AND MERCHANT'S TRANSCRIPT.

Published by
HENRY LINDESEY,
No. 6 North Water-street.



Terms:
ONE DOLLAR PER YEAR,
PAYABLE IN ADVANCE.

VOL. I. NEW BEDFORD, FRIDAY MORNING, MARCH 17, 1843. NO. 1.

VESSEL'S NAME	TON	MASTERS.	AGENTS.	SAILED.	WHERE BOUND	DATE AND PLACE OF LAST REPORT.	OIL.
New-Bedford.							
Abigail	310	Cox	C W Morgan	July 28, 39	Pacific	Nov 2, at Oahu bound home	1600 sp
Adeline	329		I Howland jr & Co	In port			
Addison	126	West	Isaac B Richmond	June 3, 41	New Holland	July 20, off New Holland	500 blbs
Agate, brig	81	Cornell	Pope & Morgan	Mar 27, 42	Atlant c	Sept 3, heard from	17 sp
Alexander	121	Dornin	J A Parker	Aug 22, 42	Pacific	Aug 27, lat 41 lon 64, spoken	clean
America	118		I Howland jr & Co	In port			
Amethyst	359	Reynard	J A Parker & Son	Oct 20, 42	Indian Ocean	Nov 20, at Porto Praya, C de Verds	clean
Ann Alexander	253	Taber	George Howland	Oct 25, 41	Pacific	May or June, at Gallapagos Islands	clean
Archer	322	Ricketson	Tobey & Ricketson	July 26, 41	Pacific	Nov 6, at Tombez	not stated
Argus	344	Davis	Win R Rodman	July 11, 42	Pacific	August 19, sailed from Fayal	clean
Averick	385	Mickell	J A Parker & Son	Aug 1, 40	Pacific	July 20 off New Holland	1600 sp
Bahena	301	Manchester	J & J Howland	Nov 12, 41	Pacific	In July, on Off Shore Ground	200 sp
Benj Tucker	349	Worth	Charles R Tucker	Nov 16, 39	Pacific	April 25, at Sandwich Islands	1200 sp
Bogota, brig	155	Fuller	I H Bartlett	June 7, 42	Atlantic	Spoke no date, lat 26, lon 42	not stated
Brandt	310		N Leonard & Perkins	In port			
Barclay	241		James Arnold	In port			
Brighton	354	Cox	C R Tucker	Aug 2, 42	Indian Ocean	Sept 15, at Cape De Verds	17 sp
Bragnosa	176		Pope & Morgan	In port			
Bramlin, bark	245	Taber	Gideon Allen	Dec 25, 41	Pacific	June 10, off Massafiero	100 sp
Callao	321	Norton	Henry Taber & Co	Nov 1, 42	Pacific	Nov 20, spoken, lat 15 N lon 25	clean
Cambria	362	Harding	James Arnold	Dec 23, 42	Pacific		
California	398	Lawrence	I Howland jr & Co	May 21, 42	Pacific	Sept. 13, at Tombez.	100 sp
Canada	545	Topham	Barton Ricketson	Jan 1, 43	N W Coast		
Caroline	364	McKenzie	Pardon G Seabury	Dec 17, 42	N W Coast	Jan 10, at St Michaels	clean
Chas. Drew	314	Carey	Wm Gifford	July 14, 42	Pacific	August 2, at Fayal	clean
Canton	109	Leary	J Perry & Tillingham	Nov 23, 42	Pacific		
Canton, bark	240	Lucas	Charles R Tucker	Nov 9, 41	Pacific	March 12, spoken lat 55 S lon 79 W	clean
Canton Packet	274	Shearman	I H Bartlett	Dec 12, 41	Pacific	July 11, at Lombock	100 sp
C W Morgan	351	Norton	C W Morgan	Sept 6, 41	Pacific	Sept at Tombez	not stated
Charles	296	Gardner	Samuel Rodman	May 22, 41	Pacific	Spoke no date &c	800 sp
Chase, bark	153	West	Barton Ricketson	Dec 31, 42	Atlantic		
Chs Frederick	317	Allen	J A Parker & Son	June 20, 42	Pacific	July 27, at Cape de Verds	clean
China	370			In port			
Cicero	252	Taber	Lemuel Kollock	Aug 20, 42	Indian Ocean	Sept 19, at Fayal	clean
Copia	315	Taber	Lemuel Kollock	Nov 1, 42	N W Coast		
Corinthian	101	Paddock	George Howland	Aug 11, 39	Pacific	Aug 5, at Callao	2400 sp
Cortez	382	Hammond	George Howland	June 30, 42	Pacific		
Courier	331	Marchant	Randall & Haskell	Oct 4, 42	Pacific		
Cherokee, bark	261	Adams	Hathaway & Luce	Dec 14, 40	N W Coast	On N W Coast Aug 9,	500 sp 1400 wh
Clarice, bark	237	Dexter	C W Morgan	Dec 7, 41	South Atlantic	Nov 7 Abrolhos Banks	160 sp
Cora, bark	220	Baker	I H Bartlett	Sept 2, 41	Pacific	Sept 13, at Tombez	150 sp
Condor	348	Norton	C W Morgan	Oct 9, 41	New Holland	July 20, off New Holland	700 wh
Cornelia, bark	216	Devoll	Kemuel Kollock	May 17, 42	South Atlantic	Nov 6 on Abrolhos banks	363 sp
Ch's Packet, bk	181	Randall	Levi L. Crane	Feb 8, 42	Atlantic		
Cull	291	Debano	N Leonard & Son	Oct 14, 39	Pacific	July 10, at Payta	1700 sp
Coral	370	Seabury	Gideon Allen	Nov 16, 42	Pacific	Jan 11, spoke lat 28 40 & lon 23 02 W	clean
Columbus, bark	313	Pease	Win R Rodman	May 21, 40	Pacific	June 16, at sea	750 sp
Dartmouth	336	Wimpenney	I Howland jr & Co	Feb 20, 41	Pacific	Heard from previous to Jan 31, 42	200 sp
Desdemona, bk	295	Phinney	T & A R Nye	Oct 7, 39	Pacific	May 30, at sea	400 sp
Draper	291	Lawton	Joseph Dunbar & Co	May 1, 42	Indian Ocean	July 26, at Fayal	165 sp
Dragon, bark	190	Clark	Tobey & Ricketson	June 23, 42	Indian Ocean	Oct 6, on Abrolhos banks	30 sp
Emily Morgan	368	Ewer	C W Morgan	April 12, 42	Pacific	July 8, off Valparaiso	clean
Enigma, bark	246	Hall	Daniel Tripp	July 4, 42	Atlantic	Sept 6, at St Jago	250 sp 150 wh
Elizabeth	339	Eastham	T & A R Nye	June 7, 41	New Holland	Oct 1, at King George's Sound	250 sp 150 wh
Endavour, bark	252	Weeks	Henry Cannon	June 22, 41	Indian Ocean	June 27, off New Holland	250 sp 100 wh
Enterprise	291	Bailey	Alfred Gibbs	Oct 20, 42	Pacific		
Euphrates	365	Post	Lawrence Grinnell	May 20, 42	Pacific	Oct. 20, at sea bound to Valparaiso	clean
Eagle	336	Coffin	Jreh Perry	Sept 2, 40	Pacific	Aug 5, at Payta	1200 sp
Emeline, brig	98	Wood	Barton Ricketson	July 11, 41	Atlantic	Nov 15, sailed from St Thomas	clean
Emerald	359	Marchant	Riddell & Dix	Dec 26, 39	Pacific	Oct at Oahu	1600 sp
Equator, bark	263	Fisher	John A Standish	Nov. 2, 39	Pacific	June 20, sailed from Tahiti	1200 sp
Falcon	273		Wilcox & Richmond	In port			
Fenelon	328	Hathaway	B B Howard	Sept 1, 42	Indian Ocean	At sea, spoken, 42 days out	clean
Florida	330	Cunningham	E C Jones	Sept 14, 41	New Holland	July 20, off New Holland	300 sp 1000 wh
Frances	318	Christian	James Arnold	Dec 22, 39	Pacific	April 29, sailed from Tahiti	1350 sp
Frances, 2d	368	Hussey	Gideon Allen	Sept 1, 40	Pacific	Nov 2, at Oahu	1400 sp
Fra. Henrietta	407		C W Morgan	In port			
Franklin, bark	218	Beetle	J A Parker & Son	July 10, 39	Pacific	Sept at Tombez	800 sp
Franklin	333		Abm H Howland	In port			
Garland, bark	234	Scranton	J D Thompson	June 21, 42	Pacific	July 25, at Fayal	clean
Gen Pike	313		Wm Gifford	In port			
Geo Howland	374	Cushman	George Howland	May 20, 42	Pacific	June 11, at Fayal	clean
George	273	Cash	J A Parker & Son	Dec 26, 39	Pacific	Nov 2, at Oahu, bound home	1400 sp
Gid'u Howland	379	Cox	I Howland jr & Co	Oct 27, 41	Pacific	Dec 11, off Rio Janeiro	clean
Geo & Susan	356	Howland	Geo Howland	Oct 17, 41	Pacific	Sept. 13, at Tombez.	250 sp
Geo & Martha	275	Smalley	Randall & Haskell	Dec 14, 42	Indian Ocean	Dec 19, spoken at sea	clean

Figure 1

voyage was the Isaac Howland, which sailed from New Bedford May 30, 1839, to the Pacific Ocean. Its last report on June 20, 1842, said she had 2,300 barrels of sperm oil.

On page eight (*see Figure 2*), Henry Lindsey greeted the public.

It is our intention to present to our readers, a weekly report carefully corrected from the latest advices, of every vessel engaged in the Whaling business from ports of the United States together with the prices current of our staple commodities, and interesting items of commercial intelligence [*sic*].

From the ephemeral and fragmentary form in which our shipping news appears in general newspapers; from the vast amount of property invested in the Whaling business, and the many thousand seamen engaged therein, coming as they do from all parts of the country, we have been led to believe that a paper of this kind would be interesting to ship owners and merchants, and not less so to the parents and wives, the sisters, sweethearts and friends of that vast multitude of men, whose business is upon the mighty deep, and who are for years separated [*sic*] from those to whom they are dear.

To all classes of persons mentioned, and to the public generally we present this specimen number, and ask for their patronage, promising on our part to use our best endeavors to merit their approbation, by making from time to time such improvements in our sheet as experience shall suggest, and circumstances permit.

The price of the newspaper was \$1 per year payable in advance or 6¢ per issue.

Lindsey said the paper would be published on Tuesdays in the future. There were no advertisements in that first issue, but Lindsey said “arrangements will soon be made for their insertion.” The last page also contained a section called “Memoranda.” This section was a grab bag of information that Henry Lindsey believed was relevant to whalemens, shipowners, and anyone else interested in the industry. This section did two things: it told of the human element aboard those hundreds of ships on the list—stories of illness, death, mutiny, murder, desertion, and cannibalism; and it provided other news, usually business, legal or political in nature, that was relevant to the whaling industry.

The relevant news was of a local, national and international nature. The sources included letters sent home by whalers, newspapers picked up at foreign ports and brought back to New Bedford, and information relayed directly to the newspaper by whalemens arriving in port. However, two sources were more valuable than the others. One was the various out-of-town newspapers offered to the public at the Merchant’s Reading Room on the second floor of the building that housed the Daily Mercury. Items were lifted from

VESSEL'S NAME	TO	MASTERS.	AGENTS.	SAILED.	WHERE BOUND	DATE AND PLACE OF LAST REPORT.	OIL.
Greenport.							
Bayard	339	Fordham	H & N Corwin	Sept 26, 41	Crozet Island	June 29, at St Helena	1300 wh 150 sp
Caroline	252		A P S Willetts	In port			
Delia	314	Glover	H & N Corwin	Dec 4, 41	South Seas	June 29, at St Helena	300 bbls
Rossmore, bark	252	Case	Wiggins & Parsons	Oct 1, 42	South Seas		
Seraph, brig	174		Samuel London		Atlantic	Jan 13, at Rio Janeiro, discharging	
Triad	336	Case	H & N Corwin	July 7, 41	New Zealand	July 10, at Tahiti	1400 wh 30 sp
Jamesport.							
Washington	230	Wilbur		Sept 30, 41	South Atlantic	June 29, at St Helena	1100 wh
Hudson.							
Edward	271	Daggett	Barnard Curtis & Co	Dec 4, 40	Pacific	July, at Nookahva	400 bbls
Martha	369	Whelden	Barnard Curtis & Co	July 30, 41	Indian Ocean	March 30, at Madagascor	880 bbls
Poughkeepsie.							
Factor	343	Howland	David S Shearman	July 30, 41	Indian Ocean	July 30, off New Holland	200 bbls
N. P. Tallmadge	370	Coffin	David S Shearman	Oct 21, 40	Pacific	Sept 13, at Toulon	150 sp 2450 wh
New England	373	Howland	David S Shearman	Dec 27, 39	Pacific	Sept 29, at Oahu	600 sp 1200 wh
Vermont, bark	292	Almy	David S Shearman	Dec 10, 40	New Zealand	Aug 1, sailed from Bay of Islands	1450 wh 350 sp
New York.							
Autumn, bark	140	Wady	D A Kingsland & Co	Feb 8, 43	Indian Ocean		
Sabina	410	Slate	Slate, Gardner, Howell	Sept 6, 41	Crozet Island	Oct 21, at King George's Sound	1600 wh
Newark.							
John Wells	366	Russell	J. H. Stephens	July 30, 41	N W Coast	July 17 on Northwest Coast	1500 wh 100 sp
Wilmington.							
Ceres	329	Ayres	Stephen Bonnal	Aug 1, 41	Pacific	March 20, at Marquesas Islands	100 bbls
Jefferson	339	Howland	Stephen Bonnal	Dec 18, 41	Indian Ocean	July 30, off New Holland	60 bbls
Lucy Ann	305	Cox	Stephen Bonnal	Nov 28, 41	Indian Ocean	June 20, off New Holland	70 sp

MERCHANT'S TRANSCRIPT.

NEW-BEDFORD, MARCH 17, 1843.

TO THE PUBLIC

We issue this morning the first number of the "WHALEMEN'S SHIPPING LIST AND MERCHANT'S TRANSCRIPT." It is our intention to present to our readers, a weekly report carefully corrected from the latest advices, of every vessel engaged in the Whaling business from ports of the United States together with the prices current of our staple commodities, and interesting items of commercial intelligence.

From the ephemeral and fragmentary form in which our shipping news appears in general newspapers; from the vast amount of property invested in the Whaling business, and the many thousand seamen engaged therein, coming as they do from all parts of the country, we have been led to believe that a paper of this kind would be interesting to ship owners and merchants, and not less so to the parents and wives, the sisters, sweethearts and friends of that vast multitude of men, whose business is upon the mighty deep, and who are for years separated from those to whom they are dear.

To all classes of persons mentioned, and to the public generally we present this specimen number, and ask for their patronage, promising on our part to use our best endeavors to merit their approbation, by making from time to time such improvements in our sheet as experience shall suggest, and circumstances permit.

Tuesday will hereafter be the regular publication day of the "Whalemens Shipping List." Single copies for sale at No. 6 North Water Street, and at the Exchange News Room. Price 6 cents.

As the Shipping List will be a valuable medium for advertisements, arrangements will soon be made for their insertion.

MEMORANDA

Bark Mary Frazier, of New Bedford, heard from at sea, was bound in Tahiti to land Jos. Gray, seaman, who had been sick some time.

Ship Euphrates, of this port, was heard from Oct. 20, bound into Valparaiso to procure medical aid for the Capt. who was sick.

Lost from on board of ship Parachute, of this port, June 12, 1841, (killed by a whale), Walter Westervell, of Poughkeepsie, aged about 23. Died on board June 19, Wm Blinn, 2d, of Weatherfield, aged about 35.

LATEST ADVICES.

SANDWICH ISLANDS	Nov. 1
SOCIETY ISLANDS	Oct. 17
TALCAHUANA	Oct. 27
ISLE OF FRANCE	Oct. 1
LIVERPOOL	Feb. 4
HAVRE	JAN. 31

Statement of Importations of Sperm and Whale Oil into the United States, since January 1, 1843:

JANUARY 1843.			
Edgartown.	Sp.	Wh.	Bone.
Ship Almira,	2200		
Bristol.			
Leonidas,	550		
Provincetown.			
"Brig Franklin,	500		
Total, 2 ships 1 bg.	3250	none	none
Imp'ts in Jan. '42,	13,662	5164	

FEBRUARY 1843.			
New-Bedford.	Sp.	Wh.	Bone.
Ship Brandt,	500	110	800
India,	679	2541	12,500
F Henrietta,	1700	1420	11,500
Braganza,	400	3600	42,000
Gen. Pike,	600	900	7,900
New London.			
Clematis,	500	2200	17,600
Salem.			
Bark Emerald,	400	1100	8,200
Provincetown.			
Brig Phenix,	320		
Tl. 6 sh. 1 bk. 1 bg.	5,099	11,871	
Imp'ts in Feb. '42,	8,461	6,719	

MARCH 1843.			
Warren.	Sp.	Wh.	Bone.
Ship Magnet,	1800	1600	12,800
Bark.			
Bark Massasoit,	300		
New-Bedford.			
Ship Barclay,	200	1650	13,500
Parachute,	400	2400	22,000
*ACTUAL AMOUNT.—In all cases not otherwise specified, the amount given is estimated, but will not vary materially from the actual amount.			

NEW-BEDFORD OIL MARKET.

SPERM.—Within the last ten days sales of between two and three thousand bbls have been made at 54 a 55 cts. cash. A few small parcels inferior brought 51 a 52 cts.

WHALE.—All remaining in market previous to the arrival of the Barclay, was sold for 34 cts. cash.

BONE.—Last sales 30 cts

NEW YORK MARKET

[For the week ending March 11, 1843.]
OILS.—A further sale of 1600 bbls wh N W Coast has been made for export supposed at 33; cts cash. Best manufactured sperm sold slowly at 65 a 70 cts for Winter, and 60 a 65 for Fall, the highest rates for bleached. Crude 52 a 55 cts.

CANDLES.—Sperm are dull, lot of New Bedford, sold at 22 cts.

WHALEBONE.—A sale of 10,000 lbs South Sea has been made for export, on terms not transpired, and 3000 lbs N W Coast, from a lot just received, also for export, at 24 cts

PROVISIONS.—Beef goes off pretty readily at \$5.62; a 57 for country and city meat, and \$4 a 4.50 for prime; new Ohio pork is still mostly withheld from the Market, and prices have an upward tendency; mess sells at \$8.50, and prime \$6.75, which for the latter is a considerable advance, it being very scarce; 100 bbls old prime sold at \$5.62, and there is probably now none to be had for less. Ohio Lard continues very dull, with small sales No 1, at 54—good is offered at 54. Prime Western Dairy Butter is in moderate demand at 15 a 15 cts, ordinary to good 7 a 6, common 5, a 6. Cheese remains dull.

FLOUR.—The Flour market continues dull, the sales being confined to small lots for home use, prices, however, have not varied. They are Genesee, \$4.75 a 5; Ohio flat horn, \$4 62 a 5; Pennsylvania, a 4.12; Richmond City Mills, \$5.25 a 5.87.

DUCK.—The demand for Russia sail cloth is quite moderate, being confined to small lots for immediate use. Prices, Dimety Bruugins, per piece \$18.50 a 19; Jogan do, and X U \$17.50 a 18; Imperial wide, 16 a 18; Ravens light, 6.25 a 7; do heavy, 7.25 a 8; German half, 10 a 11; Holland A A 24.50 a 25.

HAMP.—Market quiet, small sales of Russia have been made at \$300 for clean; 190 for Onshot.

GRAIN.—The stock of wheat is now reduced extremely low, and held at 90 cts. No Northern Rye in Market; last sales, 58 cts; Corn is extremely scarce, and wanted, and prices have an upward tendency; prices Southern 53 a 54; New Orleans, 53 a 54.

COPPER.—New Sheathing is steady at 22 cts, 6 mos; 7 a 8000 lbs old have changed hands at 15 cts cash.

COTTON.—The market, for causes before noticed, continues inactive, and as shippers operate cautiously, prices of common qualities are but feebly supported,—good and fine being scarce, are held very firmly. The sales being scarce, are held very firmly. The sales include 1200 bales, Upland and Florida at 41 a 74 cents; 300 Mobile, 5 a 8; and 250 New Orleans, 3 a 8—making a total for the week of 4350 bales.

FOREIGN.

HAVRE, Feb. 7.—Whalebones.—We have no sales to notice this week, and prices are consequently still nominal at 2 201 a 1 kil. duty paid. Sylvie de Grasse has come in with 226 bundles. Stock, 30 tons against 15 last year.

LONDON, Feb. 7.—Oils.—The demand continues languid. Sperm is taken off in small quantities at about the former currency.

HAMBURG, Feb. 7.—Oil.—The stock of fish oil is light: Pale seal nets £25. 1bs to £30. 7s per ton: Whale, Greenland nets £28. 6s to £29 per ton; South Sea nets £27 per ton. The above are the net proceeds clear of Commission Exchange and all charges.

Figure 2

these newspapers and reprinted, usually verbatim, in the Whalemen's Shipping List with credit given to the appropriate newspaper. This was a common practice of the time and a forerunner of the modern-day wire service. The second source was the foreign correspondence that Henry Lindsey maintained with United States diplomats, merchants, whaleship captains, transplanted New Bedforders—basically anybody who could provide information from outside New Bedford. Often, letters received from abroad were published in the Whalemen's Shipping List.

In the newspaper's inaugural issue, the first two items under "Memoranda" told of two New Bedford ships that interrupted voyages because of sick crewmen. The third item read: "Lost from on board ship of ship Parachute, of this port, June 12, 1841, (killed by a whale,) Walter Westervell, of Poughkeepsie, aged about 23. Died on board June 19, Wm Blinn, 2d, of Weathersfield, aged about 35." The risk of death was everywhere for the whaleman—in the form of a thrashing whale, harpoon ropes that whizzed off the deck or out of a cramped whaleboat as a stuck whale fled, hostile natives on foreign lands, fellow whalemen armed with razor-sharp knives, unsanitary conditions on board, and poor diets. The human casualties of whaling were a regular feature of the Whalemen's Shipping List for more than seven decades, although only major or especially dramatic tragedies were deemed worthy of more than a passing mention.

That first issue listed the imports of sperm oil, whale oil and whalebone into the United States since January 1, 1843. The list showed that in January 1843 there were 3,250 barrels of sperm oil imported, but no whale oil or whalebone was imported. That was a huge drop from the January 1842 imports of 13,862 barrels of sperm oil and 5,464 barrels of whale oil. There were no whalebone imports recorded in January 1842. The February 1843 imports totaled 5,099 barrels of sperm oil, compared with 8,461 the year before, and 11,871 barrels of whale oil, compared with just 6,719 the year before. Ultimately, imports of all whale products for the entire year of 1843 increased from the previous year. However, as will be explained later, Lindsey believed he may have started

his newspaper too soon because he later characterized 1843 as a “depression” year.

The next section detailed prices on the New Bedford market, with 2,000-3,000 barrels of sperm oil being sold 10 days prior to publication for 54¢-55¢ per barrel. Whale oil was sold for 34¢ per barrel and whalebone for 30¢ per pound.

The New York market for the week ending March 11, 1843, sold 1,600 barrels of whale oil from the northwest coast for the export price of about 34¢ cash per barrel. The “best manufactured” sperm oil sold slowly at 65¢-75¢ per barrel for winter and 60¢-65¢ for fall, but bleached oil garnered the highest prices. Crude sperm oil sold for 52¢-55¢ per barrel. Meanwhile, 3,000 pounds of whalebone from the northwest coast sold for 31¢-32¢ per pound. The paper also listed the prices of whale products in London, England, and Hamburg, Germany, and then the prices of such whaleship provisions as beef, Ohio pork, “Prime Western Dairy Butter,” flour, hemp, grain, copper and cotton.

The second issue instituted a feature called “Letter Bags” that told readers which ships were making mail deliveries to which ports, so readers could correspond with their loved ones abroad.

Occasionally, the newspaper saw fit to take a stand on an issue or to make editorial comments on certain news developments or general industry conditions. These opinions, which criticized events perceived as harmful to the whale fishery and championed those perceived as beneficial, sometimes were disguised as letters from afar or from a concerned New Bedford resident and were rarely signed by the newspaper’s publisher. The first opinion piece ran in the newspaper’s third issue, dated March 28, 1843, and discussed the numerous reports from Pacific Ocean sperm whalers that catches had decreased considerably from the previous season. This could be seen by the statistics of the first issue mentioned above. Lindsey said the combination of low catches, withdrawals of ships from the whale fishery, and diminishing duties in Britain offered hope for those who remained in the fishery. At the same time, Lindsey conveyed a sort of editorial protectionism for those whalers and shipowners who had stuck with the

business through the bad times, but whose impending good fortunes could be ruined by opportunists. As described earlier in this paper, the whaling industry regularly went through cycles in which lower catches and higher demand raised the prices of whale products, which spurred more shipowners to join the industry, which glutted the market with product and subsequently lowered prices.

...[W]e infer that holders and importers of sperm oil have seen their darkest day, and that they may soon hope to realize remunerating prices for that staple.

We, however, do not think that the prospects are such as to encourage reflecting and judicious men to join with the host of those who have seemed disposed, for some years past to cover the ocean with whale ships. A business *overdone*, must lead to the same results, whether upon land or ocean.⁵⁰

It appeared that Lindsey had a crystal ball, for within a few years of this editorial the fishery peaked and then began its long, slow decline to nothingness. The central reasons for this decline were the higher prices of whale products, and the subsequent turn to substitutes, caused by drastic drops in the whale populations.

This theme was repeated in the May 9, 1843, edition through news from a Captain Soper of the Marcus of Sag Harbor, which had just sold 700 barrels of whale oil and 500 barrels of sperm oil from the North Pacific: "Capt. Soper reports ships very numerous and no whales to be seen, the weather constantly stormy and much ice, and the ships being so thick that they were obliged to keep their bells ringing constantly to prevent coming in contact with each other."

Editorial comments also were dispensed every year in the newspaper's annual review of the industry's performance. After a few years, this review contained statistics on imports and exports of sperm oil, whale oil, and whalebone; the average price for each commodity; the number of vessels in the fleet and their tonnage, along with a breakdown of which ports they sailed from; and the number of vessels in the North Pacific Ocean fleet, along with their total catch of oil. Except for some of the first reviews, these statistical tables were accompanied by analyses of the current data, a comparison with the previous year's data, and predictions for the upcoming year. These annual reviews were

so popular with the public they sometimes had to be reprinted in later editions.⁵¹

Sometimes, however, the publisher did not check the figures listed in the publication and it was not uncommon for the specified totals to be wrong. For example, the April 4, 1843, edition said there were 642 vessels employed in the whale fishery in the United States at that time. The table accompanying that statement said New Bedford had 213 vessels; Nantucket: 85; Fairhaven, Massachusetts: 46; New London, Connecticut: 45; Sag Harbor, New York: 43; Warren, Rhode Island: 21; Stonington, Connecticut: 17; Provincetown, Massachusetts: 14; Newport, Rhode Island: 12; Edgartown, Massachusetts: 11; Mattapoisett, Massachusetts: 11; Westport, Massachusetts: 11; and “all other ports”: 112. That added up to 641 vessels. No explanation or correction was offered in later issues. Sometimes this carelessness made its way into the annual reviews and a figure listed in one year’s table was changed in the following year’s table. Fortunately, this happened rarely during the newspaper’s 72-year lifespan and any changes usually were increases resulting from more complete information being provided after the annual reviews were published.

The Whalemen’s Shipping List also was not above some blatant self-promotion. In its fourth issue of April 4, 1843, the newspaper published congratulations and favorable reviews from 13 other newspapers, including the New York Courier and Enquirer: “This paper, if it be judiciously conducted, WILL [emphasis in original] succeed; and the department of national industry to which it is to be devoted will reap great benefit from it...” Henry Lindsey assured readers “that no labor or pains will be spared to make our sheet the vehicle of *accurate* and *the latest* [emphasis in original] news, in the department to which it is devoted...” The newspaper’s first advertisements also appeared in that issue. They were placed by David Baker, a New Bedford “mathematical instrument maker,” and by Henry Lindsey himself, offering book and job printing at the newspaper’s offices.

Some examples of general news relevant to the whaling industry included a May

9, 1843, item taken from a letter mailed from London to a man in New Bedford. That letter said the British Parliament considered delaying for another year its planned reduction in July 1843 of duties on spermaceti oil imports. The Whalemen's Shipping List said this issue was "of great moment to the American Whale Fishery..." A letter from the United States consul in Chile in the June 6, 1843, edition noted that a massive yellow fever outbreak in that country forced authorities to impose quarantines on whaleships landing in Chilean ports. Consul P. H. Delano assured New Bedforders that he was working to ease the quarantine. Delano, in that same letter, also related the story of a New Bedford seaman who murdered one of his crewmates while in a Chilean port. Delano pledged to save the seaman from execution by arguing that the accused was insane.

The rest of that first year of publication was rather uneventful as the newspaper found its footing and carved its niche in both the newspaper and whaling industries. For much of that first year, it focused on the shipping list and the whale-product markets, and filled the rest of its pages with letters reporting ships' locations, shipwrecks, mutinies, and deaths of crewmen through accident or design. On September 19, 1843, in just the 28th issue, the newspaper expanded from eight pages to twelve pages because of "the liberal patronage which has been extended to our little sheet." The additional pages contained more whaling-specific, as well as general-interest, news, but those extra stories really were meant to fill in the spaces between advertisements: "Our paper circulates wherever in this country the WHALE FISHERY [emphasis in original] is followed, and we believe that it will be found a valuable medium for advertisements..."

So the Whalemen's Shipping List was on its way. It enjoyed relative stability in its ownership during its 72 years. Its founder, Henry Lindsey, died in 1853 at the age of 35 and the newspaper was bought by his brother, Benjamin Lindsey, Jr., who also owned the family's Daily Mercury. When Benjamin Lindsey, Jr., was named U.S. consul at St. Catharine's, Brazil, in 1861, he maintained ownership of the whaling newspaper but

turned over its management to Eben. P. Raymond. Lindsey eventually sold the newspaper to Raymond in 1873. Raymond operated the newspaper until 1889, when the poor health of both he and the industry led him to announce the paper's closing. However, Raymond's assistant, George R. Phillips, bought the paper in May 1889 and operated it until its final edition on December 29, 1914. The fact that these changes really were "in the family" meant that the newspaper maintained a steady course throughout its 3,744 editions. Besides, whalemens were not concerned with ownership, but rather with content.

CHAPTER 3

RISE OF WHALING

The Golden Age

The Whalemen's Shipping List appeared during the middle of what generally was recognized as the "Golden Age" of whaling when "the whale-fishery assumed its greatest importance and reached the zenith of its commercial value."⁵² This period began in 1835 and, depending on the source, lasted until either about 1850 or about 1860.⁵³ The height of the sperm whale fishery was 1837 when about 5.3 million gallons were imported. The height of the right whale, or whale oil, fishery was 1851 when about 10.3 million gallons were imported. The whalebone fishery peaked in 1853 when about 5.7 million pounds were imported. In terms of price, sperm oil increased from 84¢ per gallon in 1835 to \$2.55 in 1866, whale oil increased from 39¢ per gallon in 1835 to \$1.45 in 1865, and whalebone increased from 21¢ per pound in 1835 to \$1.80 in 1864. So there was money to be made in the industry, it just came in fits and starts. When one market crested, whalemen shifted to another market. The ensuing overproduction then forced them to another market. The American fleet itself peaked in 1846 with 735 vessels, while the New Bedford fleet peaked in 1857 with 329 vessels.

So this "Golden Age" saw more vessels enter the industry while prices fluctuated, which caused unstable market conditions at the time the Whalemen's Shipping List appeared in 1843. These rollercoaster-like performances led the paper to bemoan the industry one year and celebrate it the next. For example, as stated above, the Whalemen's Shipping List expanded from eight to twelve pages within its first seven months of existence because of the "liberal patronage" it had received. Yet on March 5, 1844, in the last issue of the first volume year, the newspaper raised its annual subscription price from \$1 to \$1.50, although the single-copy price remained at 6¢.⁵⁴ Henry Lindsey wrote:

The publication of the Shipping List was commenced at a period of severe depression in the business of the Whale Fishery, and although its circulation has in some measure realized our anticipations of its success, the low price at which it has been afforded has proved inadequate to sustain its highest usefulness with

reference to the heavy expenses necessarily attendant...

Lindsey appeared to have come full-circle since the optimism of the first issue. His subscribers must have complained vociferously because the price increase lasted just one issue and then reverted to \$1. Another change, this one more permanent, occurred at the same time. The newspaper originally appeared as an eight-page issue on sheets that were almost 10 inches long by almost 7 inches wide. The new volume was a four-page issue that was 15 inches long by almost 12 inches wide.

In covering the Golden Age of whaling, the Whalemen's Shipping List not only conveyed the facts, it also defended the whaling industry against criticisms from outsiders. Often, the facts it conveyed handily supported its positions and promoted a sense of well-being about the industry. The newspaper played this role even during whaling's darkest days. A frequent ploy was the publication of statistics that showed how important the whaling industry was to the economies of the United States, Massachusetts, and New Bedford. On October 10, 1843, the newspaper reprinted a Journal of Commerce article that said there were 2.02 billion tons of registered and enrolled vessels in the United States as of September 30, 1842. Of that total, 151.6 million tons were involved in whaling. Likewise, domestic exports for the United States during that same fiscal year totaled \$93 million, of which \$2.8 million was from the sea. Six issues later, on November 21, 1843, the newspaper published tables showing that exports of products from the whale fishery—specifically whale oil, spermaceti, whalebone, and spermaceti candles—accounted for \$2.09 million, or 74%, of the revenues from the export of sea products.

These statistics served another purpose for the Whalemen's Shipping List: they supported its oft-repeated call on whalemens to locate more support industries in New Bedford so all residents could benefit from whaling wealth. On February 17, 1857, the newspaper said "it is remarkable to how much better advantage any business can be carried on in a place where the employment is an absorbing one with the great mass of

the population..." A community devoted to one industry channeled the best talents of its residents into that industry and had the built-in experience to avoid mistakes, the newspaper said. New Bedford and its surrounding ports owned 70% of the American fleet at that time, so it was only natural that much of what the industry needed should be supplied by New Bedford merchants. "The whaling business is one requiring some patience," the newspaper said, "but it is quite as uniformly and permanently remunerative as any in the country." In fact, the newspaper often said New Bedford was the richest city per capita in the world at this time.

The newspaper must have believed its message was not getting through because 1859 brought another spate of articles on the topic. "Few persons are perhaps fully aware of the extent and variety of occupations which derive direct advantage from the immense capital employed in the Whale Fishery," the newspaper said on February 8, 1859. So the Whalemen's Shipping List tried to make them aware. The newspaper said 65 whaleships sailed from New Bedford in 1858 and those ships had a total value of \$1.95 million. It then listed 53 supplies used by these ships and how much of each was purchased by the ships—739,000 pounds of cordage, 520,000 pounds of sheathing copper and yellow metal, 7,800 pairs of socks and stockings, and 2,600 gallons of rum, among others. The total number of whaleships from New Bedford was 316 and they were valued at \$9.5 million and employed 9,480 seamen. The newspaper then suggested in that issue that whaling merchants, instead of spending money to boost Pacific ports like Honolulu, should invest their profits in the local economy by building "manufactories" to make those supplies for the fleet, "giving employment to a larger class of skilful mechanics and laborers, and thereby promoting the general prosperity of our city."

Four months later, on June 7, 1859, the newspaper reprinted an article from the New London, Connecticut, Star that urged whalemen to buy supplies at home and not at distant ports, particularly Honolulu in the Sandwich Islands. It said spending that money in the home port was necessary to make whaling of general benefit to hometown

residents: "All the business must be done in the home port to make it profitable, and the sooner whaling merchants withdraw their ships from the Sandwich Islands the better it will be for all concerned..." The Whalemen's Shipping List headlined this article "Truth in a Nut Shell."

The issue was addressed again on July 12, 1859, when the Whalemen's Shipping List learned that some newspapers in Honolulu had taken issue with its New Bedford-centric view. The newspaper stuck by its earlier opinions and then uttered some new ones. It said there was a growing dissatisfaction among New Bedford shipowners with the price, quality and quantity of supplies available at the Sandwich Islands, yet that dissatisfaction was self-inflicted. The rivalry among New Bedford shipowners caused them to be shortsighted: their overriding concern was to have the largest ship make the quickest voyage and bring back the most oil, the newspaper said. This philosophy held that profits would take care of themselves. As a result, the market was flooded, prices were low, and profits were down. The newspaper then predicted that the fleet would lose \$1 million that year. Shipowners, to reverse that trend, must concern themselves with their bottom lines because whaling "is a business to which New Bedford owes its prosperity, and depends somewhat for its continued activity. *Economy* [emphasis in original], at home as well as elsewhere, is what is required..." the newspaper concluded. Of course, more whaling business in New Bedford meant more business for the Whalemen's Shipping List, although the newspaper did not mention that point.

Perhaps the businessmen took the advice to heart because a September 18, 1860, article told of the "Depression of Trade at Honolulu, S.I." It said whalemens apparently revolted against the high prices charged in Honolulu for refreshments and supplies, and started shopping elsewhere. The article said stopovers had decreased by more than 50% in seven years, which brought a similar decrease in the average amount of money spent by each ship. As a result, real estate prices in Honolulu plummeted and the wages of mechanics and laborers decreased. "Hence the time is gone by for making fortunes in

ship-chandlery, and all departments of business experience more or less depression,” the newspaper said.

Yet the economic mismanagement of the industry lingered, as the January 14, 1879, edition criticized opportunists for flooding the industry with both ships and product, and subsequently causing another depression. It said the fleet increased from 163 vessels in 1875 to 186 in 1879, thus reversing the previous good fortunes.

...[T]o add to the existing depression, there has seemed to be almost a rivalry as to whom shall oftenest ship home their oil, and thus assist in reducing prices already too low...With too large a fleet on nearly all the grounds, catches have everywhere been small...and it is evident, that with the continued scarcity of whales, there must be a large reduction in the fleet to make the business profitable.

It is important to remember that the newspaper’s criticisms were meant to bring more money into the whaling industry and the local economy. That way, the newspaper profited.

A good measure of New Bedford’s prosperity had been obtained at the expense of Nantucket, as readers often were told. On February 17, 1857, the newspaper acknowledged that New Bedford held a virtual monopoly on the American industry while Nantucket, “the original seat of this enterprise,” experienced her “decline in consequence of her unfavorable position, and the emigration of many of her inhabitants...” On June 28, 1859, the newspaper ran an article from the Nantucket Inquirer that said:

There seems to be no longer any room to hope, that the whale-fishery will ever again be extensively prosecuted from Nantucket. Year after year it has declined, and now valuable ships belonging wholly [sic], or in part to wealthy owners, lie idle at our wharves, because the result of new voyages seems doubtful. Such sale of ships or parts of ships as have been made, have been made at prices surprisingly low.

In 1859, the American fleet numbered 625 vessels that weighed a combined 195,115 tons. Of those totals, New Bedford owned 316, or 51%, of the ships and 107,931, or 55%, of the tons. On the other hand, Nantucket owned 34, or 5%, of the ships.⁵⁵

The issue of foreign competition also was a sensitive one for the newspaper. As

stated earlier, the peak of the American fleet was reached in 1846 with 735 vessels that weighed a combined 233,189 tons. The New Bedford fleet that year was 254 vessels, or 35% of the total fleet, and weighed 82,633 tons, or 35% of the total fleet. During this period, the considerably smaller British whaling industry was divided into two branches: the Greenland, or north, fishery, and everywhere else, or the south fishery. Both branches had withered. For the most part, the south fishery concentrated on the waters surrounding Australia and New Zealand, both of which were settled as British penal colonies in the late 18th and early 19th centuries. Whaling was the first industry for these colonies and focused first on the right whales that bred offshore and then on the sperm whales that passed by during their annual migrations. From 1755-1844, Britain launched 861 whaling ships for the southern fishery and those ships made 2,153 voyages, according to an 1847 book written by an Englishman named Charles Enderby. When that book was published, the British southern fishery was in serious trouble. In 1846, the British launched 43 ships. Five years earlier, they launched 72. Enderby's book was a 69-page proposal for re-establishing the southern whale fishery through the colonization of, and building of a whaling station in, the Auckland Islands.

The Whalemen's Shipping List first discussed Enderby's book on April 27, 1847. It quoted Enderby's reasons for the decline of the British fishery, which included competition from the Americans, whose fleet had increased by about 300 vessels from 1834-1845. That story ended with a quote from Enderby's book that his plan would allow Britain to achieve results "that have [not] yet been attained, even by the Americans themselves." Two weeks later, on May 11, 1847, another article appeared, and this one had a nasty tone to it. Henry Lindsey, perhaps prompted by some angry readers, took aim at both Enderby and the British whaling fleet and fired a prime example of his New Bedford-centric views.

In attempting to vindicate British seamen from the imputation of want of efficiency, Mr. E. has...detracted from the well earned reputation of American whalers. In this part of his letter he entirely overlooks the fact that the British whale fishery was originally commenced under the immediate superintendence

[sic] of American officers, and that its subsequent decline was in fact simultaneous with the withdrawal of these from the service.

Lindsey continued that the employment of Americans on French and Bremen whaling ships coincided with a rise in those industries. “The fact that all nations send here to procure officers for their vessels engaged in the whale fishery is moreover generally admitted.” Enderby’s book named a British ship that he said had more success over her career than any other vessel in America. Again, Lindsey contradicted that claim by citing a New Bedford vessel with more success in the sperm oil fishery and another New Bedford vessel with more success in the whale oil, or right whale, fishery. Enderby’s claim that low wages for whalers had hurt the British fishery was contradicted by Lindsey’s claim that those wages—about 1-160th of the net proceeds of the cargo—closely approximated those of American whalers. Finally, Lindsey offered his own reasons for the decline of the British southern whale fishery: the lack of discipline aboard British ships, both in terms of efficiency and behavior, and the inferiority of British ships and gear to that of Americans. To back up his claims, Lindsey quoted a passage from Herman Melville’s 1842 stay in Nuku Hiva in the Marquesas Islands, a trip made during the research for Moby Dick which spawned two books—Typee (1846) and Omoo (1847). The passage described a poorly-equipped ship wracked by desertion and manned by a crew with an affinity for “strong drink.” Lindsey’s parting shot said these conditions, which were largely ignored by Enderby, may be the real reasons for the decline of the British southern fishery. “But we need not enlarge; and we have only to add, that if Mr. Enderby’s [sic] project ever goes into successful operation it will probably be through the instrumentality of American whalers.” The length of this critique was about two full columns of very small type, an unusually long article that showed the extent to which the Whalers’s Shipping List would go to defend its interests.

Having tackled what it perceived as foreign ignorance, the Whalers’s Shipping

List turned its attentions to domestic ignorance of the whaling industry. A month after attacking Enderby, the newspaper on June 8, 1847, castigated “such benighted souls” as “a Broadway dandy or Boston exquisite” for their false impressions of the American whaling business, the conditions aboard whaleships, and the personalities and behavioral traits of the ships’ masters.

First, the newspaper reprimanded those men who “speak with a kind of smirking, complacent sneer of New Bedford, Nantucket, and other similar places, as FISHING VILLAGES [emphasis in original].” Lindsey said the knowledge and capital required to be successful in the whaling industry was quite different from “that required to carry on the business of catching herring in a Vineyard brook, or tom-cod from the end of a wharf.” He said the 254 whaling ships in New Bedford alone were worth \$6.35 million before being outfitted and they employed a total of 6,350 seamen. Such figures made the whale fishery one of the largest and most important branches of industry in the United States, Lindsey said. He then reprinted Edmund Burke’s famous 1775 speech before the British House of Commons, quoted earlier in this paper, that extolled the successes of American whalers.

On the subject of whaleships, Lindsey said the common misconception was that they were poorly-built and they provided filthy living conditions for whalers. The fact that many whaling ships took voyages of up to five years necessarily inferred that these ships were of excellent quality, Lindsey said. During voyages, ships were cleaned, painted, washed and kept “sweet and healthy, so far as is practicable at sea in any vessel.” Besides, the general good health of whalers proved that the ships were sanitary. In fact, Lindsey’s opinion has been contradicted by modern writers who characterized whaling voyages as long, dangerous treks marked by severe weather, despicable living conditions, and violence.

Conditions aboard these ships were not wholly unlike those aboard the infamous convict ships that took “live lumber” to New Holland. The crew’s quarters were stinking holes; their food was cheap, coarse, and maddeningly monotonous; the work itself was dirty and dangerous. A voyage aboard a New England whaler was

not a luxury cruise...⁵⁶

As for the whaling masters, Lindsey said they often were wrongly perceived as ignorant, boorish men who abused their crews as easily as they killed whales. He said shipowners with such large investments in the fishery depended on whaling masters to manage multi-year voyages without any input from the home port, so they typically selected “a man of sterling integrity, of nautical skill, of knowledge of that peculiar business, character and information to conduct such a voyage...” That man, who also served as the government and the judicial system, had to deal fairly with the crew because the success of the voyage depended on the crew’s performance. Discipline of whalers at sea often was as harsh as the violent crimes they were charged with committing. However, Lindsey believed masters more often than not used restraint when disciplining seamen and said it was “remarkable” that more flogging and abuse did not occur, considering the length of whaling voyages. After completing this model portrait, Lindsey admitted there were disgraceful exceptions but said “as a body, they are as upright in their deportment abroad as they are at home, and at home they stand as high as any other class of men.” Lindsey reserved even higher praise for the shipowners, those “merchant princes” whose successes “are lauded to the skies.” It likely was more than mere coincidence that Lindsey praised advertisers and subscribers.

We have departed from our usual rule and insert this long article, because, our paper being devoted to the whaling business and having had opportunities of seeing whale ships and masters of whale ships at home and abroad, we thought it right and proper that people who, either from lack of opportunity to observe, or from stupidity, have wrong notions on these subjects, should have an opportunity to correct them.⁵⁷

Another notion Lindsey disdained was the belief that whale populations were being decimated and that was why industry conditions were so volatile. Those who pointed out that the whales were decimated did so out of economic concerns, and not the ethical or moral sensibilities that might prevail today. The argument was aimed, in part, at limiting the competition on the high seas. As stated earlier, 1846 saw the American

whaling fleet peak at 735 vessels. In 1847, the number of vessels decreased by 1% but the imports of sperm oil increased by 27%, whale oil by 51%, and whalebone by 47%. Still, the Whalemen's Shipping List believed it necessary to defend the shipowners for putting vessels to sea. In the September 28, 1847, issue, the newspaper said the fishery basically had the same number of vessels as it did 200 years earlier when the British and Dutch ruled the seas. The newspaper said Holland had 260 whaleships in 1680 and the amount of oil taken then was similar to the quantities taken in the 1840s. Also, Great Britain had at least 600 whaleships as recently as 1817. The newspaper concluded that the European fleet had decreased by about the same proportion that the American fleet had increased, so everything balanced out.

Hence we question the fact, so often asserted that whales are becoming scarcer. It is very probable that they are changing their location, in order to avoid their pursuers, for the instinct of all animals leads them to do this.

This never-say-die attitude remained alive and well through all 72 years of the Whalemen's Shipping List. No situation was so bad that encouragement could not be offered to whalemens or doubts from outsiders could not be rebuked. For example, the fleet in 1870 numbered 321 vessels, a 50% drop in just 12 years. On July 5, 1870, the newspaper commended those "plucky and enterprising" whalemens who still plugged away at the business. The article romanticized the dashing keels of New Bedford's past and their healthy catches, and said that situation would arise again. The newspaper said the fish—whales were not thought of as mammals then—were plentiful and oil prices eventually would increase, so profits could be made. "We thank Heaven that among the many croakers we have in New Bedford, that there are a few shrewd minds that have discernment enough to perceive that the skies will again be clear, and our city take another start, under the *couleur de rose* [emphasis in original]," the newspaper said.

Apparently, things did not work out as the newspaper urged because the fleet dropped to 288 vessels the next year. However, that fighting spirit remained. On November 21, 1871, the Whalemen's Shipping List took issue with yet another

newspaper editor, “who knows no more about it than the man in the moon,” who declared “that the day of the leviathan is over.” The whaling newspaper advised its journalism colleagues that whalemens knew what they were doing and they would let the world know when the industry was finished. “We still continue to shine, talk as people may. We need no advice in regard to the whale-fishery just at present.” Surely the Whalemens’s Shipping List was aware of the shrinking fleet and smaller imports. It only had to look at its own pages for the clues. However, like any smart business, it had no choice but to kiss the hand that fed it. Anything else would have ruined its own bottom line because whalemens surely would not have advertised in, or subscribed to, a publication they perceived as traitorous. In a fragile marketplace, every dollar mattered.

The newspaper even went so far as to declare several times that whaling was back in economic vogue. On October 3, 1876, the newspaper said the industry was not dead, but rather was “slumbering” and soon would awaken with its former capacity for profit and success. By this time, the fleet was down to 169 vessels, but the frequent news bulletins of their movements proved that “the whaling interest is gradually reviving, and is again surely becoming a power in the land.” The reasons for this revival were the high prices and dangers associated with petroleum products—a favorite theme of the newspaper that will be expanded upon later in this discussion—and the indispensability of whale oil for certain uses. New England’s fortunes, which were built on whaling, appeared to be reversing, for “the indications are so unmistakable that it [whaling] will once more occupy a prominent place among the great industries of the country.”

Nearly 29 years later, with the fleet down to just 42 vessels, the Whalemens’s Shipping List still spoke of an industry revival. On January 10, 1905, an article said sperm whaling was on the rebound because the stocks themselves had rebounded. It said some lucrative voyages were made to grounds between the Azores and the west coast of Africa, which “reminds of the palmy days of the American whale fishery, when ‘spouts’ were legion in all the western ocean.” However, the newspaper’s own statistics showed

that imports of sperm oil were 12,985 barrels, a *decrease* of 4,065 barrels from the year before. There were no exports that year, either.

The Golden Age of American whaling brought record harvests for several reasons, including the lack of serious foreign competition, a larger American fleet, industrialization that caused market expansion both home and abroad, and peace. But those record harvests would not have been possible without two key elements—the continuous expansion of whaling grounds and the implementation of technological advancements that allowed whalers to hunt fewer whales more efficiently. Until the mid-1770s, colonial whaling was limited to the waters of the North Atlantic Ocean. By 1791, a scarcity of whales in the North Atlantic sent vessels to the Pacific Ocean off South America. A year later, Nantucketers set up whaling stations in the Falkland Islands. In 1793, the Rebecca of New Bedford was the first American whaler to complete a round trip from the Pacific Ocean—via Cape Horn—with a cargo of sperm oil. This expansion of hunting grounds continued into the next century, as American whalers reached Hawaii in 1819, Japan in 1820, and the northeast Pacific by 1835.

Expansion of Whaling Grounds and Ports

The major expansion of American whaling grounds that occurred during the lifetime of the Whalemen's Shipping List was in 1848 when the Superior of Sag Harbor, New York, captained by Thomas Roys, explored the Bering Strait and opened the western Arctic fishery for bowheads. Just five years earlier, the first bowheads were taken by American ships in the North Pacific Ocean. Of course, Native Alaskans had been hunting the bowhead for centuries. But after Roys's voyage, the Arctic fishery became the focal point of the American industry well into the 20th century.

Thus it had taken only a little over a half a century from the time the first whalers entered the Pacific until they had penetrated as far as the Arctic. From the very first the value of the Arctic fishery was apparent...In the last few decades it has been the most important of all whaling regions...⁵⁸

At the time of the Superior's voyage, there was no whaling port on the Pacific

coast of the United States. Since the Pacific expansion, the fleet was based entirely on the Atlantic coast, most notably in Nantucket and New Bedford. Roys's voyage was the foundation for the emergence in 1865 of San Francisco, California, as a whaling port—a port that eventually would overtake New Bedford. News of the Superior's voyage reached the readers of the Whalemen's Shipping List on February 6, 1849. The article said the Superior had arrived in Honolulu in September 1848, and its captain told the following tale:

Capt. Royce [sic] says:—‘I entered the Arctic Ocean about the middle of July and cruised from continent to continent, going as high as lat 70 [sic], and saw whales wherever I went...there are plenty of whales. Hereafter doubtless, many ships will go there, and I think some provision ought to be made to save the lives of those who go there, should they be cast away.’

Roys's men killed 11 bowheads and returned to port with 1,800 barrels of oil. Roys also said the American and Asian coasts in the Arctic had been explored and both were inhabited by “numerous tribes of Indians” who were well-supplied with furs that could be bought by whalers. His comments about saving the lives of whalers were prophetic, considering the Arctic disasters of 1871 and 1876 that smashed the whaling fleet and killed dozens of whalemen. Those disasters will be analyzed later in this study during the discussion of the fall of New Bedford whaling.

Two months later, on April 24, 1849, the Whalemen's Shipping List told of an article in a New South Wales newspaper about the southern Arctic voyage of Sir James Ross of the British Royal Navy. Ross's published account said:

Dec. 29—lat 64°, 174 E. longitude, a great many whales seen, greatly resembling but said to be distinct from the Greenland kind. Sperm, as well as humpback whales, also were observed...We might have killed any number we pleased. They appeared of unusually large size, and doubtless yield a great quantity of oil, and so tame that our ships sailing past did not seem to disturb them...

The expansion into the Arctic whaling grounds was swift, fueled in large measure by the floundering sperm whale fishery, which imported 166,985 barrels of oil in 1843 but just 92,892 in 1850. According to statistics published in the Whalemen's Shipping

List, there were two ships, or less than 1% of the 236 ships in the American fleet, operating in the North Pacific in 1838 and their total catch of whale oil was 2,800 barrels. In 1848, the year of the Superior's voyage, 145 ships, or 24% of the fleet's 614, sailed in the North Pacific for a total catch of 111,070 barrels. By 1853, the Arctic grounds were fully developed and 238 ships, or 36% of the fleet's 668, had a total catch of 217,056 barrels. The North Pacific fleet never dipped below 100 from 1843-1860 and never went above 100 anytime thereafter. During the period of 1848-1860, the percentage of the American fleet operating in the Arctic increased regularly. The newly-discovered grounds were a bonanza for whalers and the imports of whalebone, the major product of the bowhead fishery, regularly exceeded 2 million pounds through 1861 and reached an all-time high of almost 5.7 million pounds in 1853.⁵⁹ Discussions of the Arctic fishery appeared in the newspaper's annual reviews for several decades after Roys's voyage, but by the end of the first decade the bowheads were so decimated that whaling in the Bering Sea virtually was abandoned. This forced ships to venture around the northern coast of Alaska into the Beaufort Sea ("The new field for Arctic whaling—Hudson's Bay—promises well..." the Whalemen's Shipping List said February 2, 1864.) and dare the pack ice to trap them for the winter. Many lost this dare, leading to the use of steam-powered whalers that did not need wind to get them home.

Occasionally, American whalemen in the Arctic encountered problems with foreign whalemen, and those problems appeared in the pages of the Whalemen's Shipping List, usually from first-hand sources. For example, the newspaper on March 26, 1861, published a letter from U.S. Associate Secretary of State William Henry Trescot to U.S. Vice Consul Thomas T. Dougherty in Honolulu. The subject was a complaint by the Russian government about "a gross outrage" committed on Russian citizens near the coast of eastern Siberia by American whalers in the Okhotsk Sea. Although the unidentified incident did not warrant any official U.S. action, Trescot wanted Dougherty to convey the message to American whaling captains that any "unlawful acts" could

result in a Russian ban on whaling within a marine league of their territory, “which would be very injurious to our whaling interests in the North Pacific...” The banning of foreign whalers in Russian waters became a reality in the December 7, 1875, edition. A British whaling bark at Shantar Bay had been boarded by a Russian war steamer and notified that foreign whalers were banned from any areas within 3 miles of the coasts and islands belonging to Russia in the Bering and Okhotsk seas. The notice said “the whale fishery in the gulfs, bays, and straits, and within a distance of 3 miles from the coasts and islands mentioned, is granted exclusively to Russians...” The British captain said “the water was alive with whales” but, under the circumstances, he stopped his hunt and left the grounds.

Another tense foreign-policy situation appeared in the July 12, 1870, issue. The article said the Canadian government had terminated all American fishing rights within 3 marine miles of the shore except for those areas specifically mentioned in the Treaty of Ghent. “The Canadians are angry because the reciprocity treaty, so-called, which gave the advantage to a very great degree to the Canadians, has not been renewed. So, out of revenge, they have determined to cut off the Yankee fishing privileges....,” the newspaper said. The article continued that the Canadians had armed vessels ready to protect their fisheries so the United States was sending its own armed vessel to protect its fleet.

The newspaper continued pointing out new whaling grounds even during the industry’s terminal days. By 1879, the fleet had been wracked by the emergence of petroleum as a substitute for whale oil, the Civil War, Arctic disasters, and declining whale populations. The fleet that year consisted of 186 vessels that weighed 40,602 tons. Just 20 years earlier, 625 vessels weighed 195,115 tons. There was not much good news to report but the Whalemen’s Shipping List did what it could. On January 7, 1879, the newspaper said the answer had been found for the question of where the whales had gone. It said a Lt. Sandeberry of the Swedish navy had returned to San Francisco from a research expedition to Russian Lapland “and he reports that never were there such quantities of whales seen in the Gulf of Narranger and the White Sea as during the last

summer, and a single Norwegian boat captured a hundred.” Through the early 1880s, the size of the North Pacific fleet increased every year and nearly tripled from 1879-1885.

Just as important as the discovery of new whaling grounds was the establishment of whaling stations where the oil and bone could be dropped off for transport back to the vessel’s home port while the vessel picked up some supplies and resumed its voyage. This efficiency enabled whaleships to stay at sea longer and, therefore, bring home more product and make more money for the shipowners. As stated earlier, there was no Pacific coast port for whaleships until after Roys’s voyage into the Bering Strait in 1848. Whaleships in the Pacific began stopping over in Hawaii in 1819. The Whalemen’s Shipping List argued on August 28, 1866, that San Francisco, California, likely would become the premier port on the Pacific for several reasons, only one of which was the prevalence of gray and right whales in the North Pacific Ocean.

All these changes...point to San Francisco as the principal place of rendezvous for whalemen ultimately, in place of the Sandwich or Hawaiian Islands...The advantages of that port for whalers are manifold and obvious. There, all outfits and supplies may be obtained considerably cheaper, the facilities for transporting oil to the Atlantic ports are far greater, and, through the medium of the telegraph, the market for oil and bone in the East can always be ascertained from two to three weeks earlier than at the Islands.

The newspaper concluded that “the Islands” would not fade away with San Francisco’s emergence because their trade with the mainland, particularly California and Oregon, was increasing as the islands’ natural resources were developed. The Pacific coast emerged as a major player in the industry after the transcontinental railroad was completed in 1869. San Francisco’s growth was slow, according to statistics in the Whalemen’s Shipping List. Its first year as a full-fledged port was 1869 when six ships that weighed a combined 1,414 tons launched from there. That also was the first year it was listed as a port in the newspaper. In 1871, the port had eight ships that weighed 2,015 tons but by 1879 it was down to one ship that weighed 260 tons. On August 12, 1879, the Whalemen’s Shipping List said there were six whaling stations on the California coast: Punta Banda, Santo Tomas, Ballast Point, Monterey, Pigeon Point and Mendocino. “Most

of the whales taken are the California graybacks, which are neither rich in oil nor easily taken,” the newspaper said. “Some seasons more than half of those killed are lost...” On January 15, 1884, the newspaper’s annual review of the fishery said the increase in Arctic whaling from San Francisco led to the building of extensive works there to manufacture and sell sperm oil. The newspaper said these works reduced costs because shipowners no longer had to pay to send the oils to the Atlantic coast for processing. By the mid-1890s, San Francisco was the Pacific coast leader with more than 30 ships that weighed more than 8,000 tons. San Francisco ultimately became the home port for the American fleet of steam whaleships.

Before San Francisco’s emergence, Panama was the port of choice for American vessels in the Pacific. In 1869, the newspaper said Panama had railroad facilities for easy shipment of oil and bone from the Pacific to the Gulf of Mexico. This eliminated the prior practice of transferring the cargo to other ships in the Hawaiian Islands and then sending those ships around Cape Horn. The January 19, 1869, edition said whalers shipped 3,250 barrels of sperm oil to the eastern seaboard from Panama and the reduced price of freight probably would induce more vessels to do the same. On June 15, 1869, the newspaper quoted a letter written by a Nantucket whaling captain that extolled Panama as “being the most advantageous port in the Pacific...”

Another important trading port was Japan, which American whalers explored in the 1820s. On July 31, 1860, the Whalemen’s Shipping List published extracts from an American treaty with Japan on trade. The treaty required that all American ships, except men-of-war and whalers, allowed Japanese customs officers to board the vessels, and all cargo ships showed Japanese authorities within 48 hours the receipt of the American consul. Whale ships that touched for supplies and ships in distress did not have to make cargo manifests, although whalers wishing to trade in Japan did.

Technological Advancements

The American fleet that hunted these new grounds also benefited from new weapons. This Golden Age ushered in many technological advancements, most notably harpoon guns and steam-powered ships, which then ushered in the modern era of whaling with its focus on faster-swimming rorquals like the blue, Bryde's, fin and sei whales.⁶⁰ These advancements gave the industry a much-needed shot in the arm because traditional methods of hand-thrown harpoons launched from a bark had decimated the slower targets, most notably the right and sperm whales. These technologies enabled whaleships to pursue the more populous species that previously had eluded them.

For much of this country's whaling history, the basic weapon used was a harpoon thrown by hand from a boat moving near the whale.⁶¹ Eventually, enough harpoons were thrown into a whale to kill it. The first significant change in weaponry was made by the British in the early 18th century. They developed a harpoon gun about 1730 after having difficulties getting close to the whales in the northern, or Greenland, fishery because of the whales' retreat north under the ice. These guns were placed in the bow and shot harpoons farther than the harpoons could be thrown. Accuracy was affected, though, by the weight of the line attached to the harpoons. The English South Sea Company eventually equipped 22 whaleships with the weapons and sent them to the northern fishery, but they returned with just 14 whales. Those early guns never were accepted generally by the American industry.

The American contributions to whaling weaponry during the Golden Age were fired from the shoulder, one for harpoons and the other for explosives. The latter eventually made the former obsolete. Several attempts to introduce shoulder harpoon-guns in the American fishery failed until a version was invented by William Greener in 1837. The bomb lance—a metal cylinder, fired from a shoulder “bomb gun,” that exploded inside the whale—was invented about 1846 by Robert Allen, of Connecticut. Nearly two dozen variations followed. These shoulder-fired weapons were introduced to

the market sometime around 1850 and were important for the Arctic bowhead fishery for two reasons: first, the harpoon guns improved the range at which whalers could strike the bowheads; and second, the bomb lance caused a single-shot kill that avoided the possibility of a wounded bowhead diving under the ice and dragging the equipment, and sometimes the boat, with it.

The Whalemen's Shipping List first mentioned "a very curious contrivance for killing whales" in its August 17, 1847, edition. It said the gun weighed about 25 pounds and had a short, brass barrel into which the harpoon was placed. A rope joined to the backside of the harpoon would attach the whale to the boat. That same story also mentioned the bomb lance. This instrument was loaded with powder containing a timed fuse. When the lance struck a whale, the fuse ignited and within 30 seconds an explosion killed the animal outright:

At least this is what the article is intended to do.

The whole apparatus is certainly very ingenious; whether or not it is really an improvement on the present mode of killing whales, is more than we are able to say. That is a question which must be settled by the whalemen themselves.

Nothing of these inventions was mentioned again until June 18, 1850, when a small article commended the whaling gun patented by Robert Brown.

The spirit of innovation seems at length to have made a successful inroad into the Whale Fishery, and 'villainous saltpetre' has been proved to possess great efficacy in securing the monsters of the deep with less hardship and exposure to danger on the part of our hardy mariners than the old method of attacking them in close encounter.

Following this was a letter from Robert Brown, who told of the successful uses of the gun, and an advertisement for the gun. By this time, advertisements for these guns and lances were commonplace in the newspaper.

A year later, on July 29, 1851, the Whalemen's Shipping List again commended a local merchant on his weapon. The article said C.C. Brand, manufacturer of Allen's improved Whaling Gun and Patent Bomb Lance, had established an agency in New Bedford for selling the weapons, "which are highly recommended by several ship masters

who have used them as the most useful and effective instruments in the capture of the whale which have yet been offered to the public...”

The search for better whaling weapons did not stop at bombs: it also pursued electricity and poison as more efficient and safer methods of killing whales. The Whalemens's Shipping List ran at least four articles on the electrocution of whales. The first appeared on July 5, 1852, in a letter from a Bremen whaling captain that explained the process and lauded its success. The whale was hit with an electrified harpoon and then a magnet was used to retrieve the carcass, the letter said. The newspaper said patent applications had been made and a New Bedford agent soon would sell the “magnetic apparatus.” A month later, on August 3, 1852, the newspaper reprinted a New York Herald article that said the French successfully used this method, even though the Whalemens's Shipping List called this “humbug.” This method never caught on during the Golden Age of whaling and no New Bedford business advertised such wares in the pages of the Whalemens's Shipping List. This method was tried well into the 1940s by the Norwegians, who met with mixed success: too much current and the whale burned; too little current and the unconscious whale’s lungs filled with water, the animal drowned, and the carcass sank.

As far back as 1831, research had been conducted on poisoning whales. The newspaper on October 30, 1860, said a British scholar claimed success with “hydrocyanic or prussic acid” as the poison. Two ounces of the solution were placed in tubes attached to each harpoon for use in the Greenland, or northern, fishery. The tubes released their solutions when the harpoon struck the whale.

The leviathan immediately ‘sounded,’ or dived perpendicularly downward, but in a very short time the rope relaxed, and the whale rose to the surface quite dead. The men were so appalled by the terrific effect of the poisoned harpoon, that they declined to use any more of them.

Poisoning and electrocuting whales never caught on in the American fishery, perhaps due to early rumors among Nantucketers in the 1830s that whalemens died from

handling poisoned blubber. On the other hand, shoulder guns and bomb lances caught on. For example, Charles Scammon started using them in 1857 to hunt gray whales in Baja California lagoons. In 1864, the Norwegian Svend Foyn invented the first workable harpoon cannon, which was mounted in the bow of the boat and shot a harpoon with an attached grenade. These weapons changed whaling so radically that the period beginning with the 1860s has been called “modern whaling,” while the previous period has been called “old whaling.”⁶² The difference between the two is that shoulder guns and bomb lances changed the techniques whalers used and also changed the targets of those techniques. As stated earlier, “old whaling” concentrated on slower-swimming species like bowhead, gray, right and sperm whales. Modern whaling, through the use of newer weapons and steam-powered ships, allowed whalers to hunt the faster-swimming rorquals like the blue, Bryde’s, fin and sei whales. Modern techniques revitalized an industry that had hunted the slower species to the point of extinction.

Steam whalers, which used boilers to augment their sails, were necessary in modern whaling not only to chase the rorquals but to provide safe transport through the Arctic ice, which claimed many a wind-powered ship in the 1870s. The British sent a steam whaler into the Davis Strait as early as 1857, but the idea did not take hold until Norway used such a vessel in the Greenland fishery in 1864. Four years later, that steamer—Foyn’s Spes et Fides (Hope and Faith)—caught a record 30 rorquals using the harpoon cannon. It was not until 1879 that Americans used steam whalers and that first ship—Mary & Helen—left New Bedford on September 9. During this time, the industry experienced a resurgence because of the high demand for whalebone needed to make corsets. Whalebone in 1870 sold for 85¢ a pound but by 1878 it sold for \$2.46 a pound. The bowhead whale had the longest baleen plates of all the whales—up to 14 feet in size—so another rush to the Arctic commenced. The fastest way to get there was on a steamer.

The Mary & Helen was first mentioned by the Whalers’ Shipping List on

March 18, 1879, when it said the ship was being built for Capt. William Lewis, of New Bedford, by Goss & Sawyer of Bath, Maine. The article listed the ship's specifications and said it would arrive in New Bedford about August 1 of that year. On September 2, 1879, the newspaper said the ship would leave port in eight days (it actually left in seven) bound for the Arctic Ocean with a crew of 34. The vessel was 155 feet long with a beam of 30 feet, a hold that was 16.5 feet deep, and a total burden of almost 421 tons. The boiler was capable of 200 horsepower and the ship had bunkers for 200 tons of coal and storage space for 2,700 barrels of oil.

She will use her sails principally, and fall back on steam whenever necessary. She carries enough coal to last one season... The owners are to be congratulated on this valuable acquisition to the New Bedford fleet.

The vessel's initial voyage was a profitable one, as it returned with 2,350 barrels of oil and 45,000 pounds of whalebone for a total value of more than \$100,000. This turned a profit for the \$65,000 ship and sparked plans by Lewis for more steamers. He built three more by 1881.⁶³ On July 27, 1880, the Whalemen's Shipping List told of a successful marriage between the new technologies of weapons and steamers. The steamer Daisy Whitelaw hunted in the waters off San Francisco using a bomb rocket, which exploded inside the whale and killed it instantly. The article said the ship had "for some time been successfully engaged in the capture of these mammoth inhabitants of the sea," including California gray, fin, "hunchback," and sulphur-bottom, or blue, whales.

On March 22, 1881, the Whalemen's Shipping List said the Mary & Helen had been sold to the United States government for \$100,000 for rescue missions in the Arctic. At the time of her sale, the vessel carried 2,200 barrels of whale oil and 265 barrels of sperm oil. One week later, the newspaper said next year's Arctic fleet would have three new vessels—the Belvedere, Lucretia, and North Star—with a fourth—the Mary & Helen II—under construction for use in 1883. Those ships were built by Lewis after the initial success of the Mary & Helen but they did not fare as well. For example, the North Star was crushed in the Arctic during its first voyage. Shortly after Lewis's shipbuilding

spree, California entrepreneurs built four steamers and bought the Mary & Helen II from Lewis.

The steamers boosted the industry but, obviously, not to its former levels. In 1878, the year before the Mary & Helen was launched, whalebone imports into the United States totaled 207,259 pounds. With the launching of the steamers, imports remained above that figure during every year until 1895, including a high of 585,011 pounds in 1887, according to the newspaper's annual statistics. The all-time high was nearly 5.7 million pounds in 1853. By 1894, steamers were the only vessels having any success in the Arctic. The Whalemen's Shipping List said in its February 13, 1894, annual review that "almost the entire catch having been made by the steamers, as they were able to penetrate the ice, and did so as far east as McKenzie river [sic], Cape Bathurst, and Banks Land, where the whales were found in large numbers...Only the steamers were able to go east of Point Barrow, owing to the ice and fog..." The catch of bowheads was 294 during the 1893 season, compared with about 215 in 1892, the newspaper said. By this time, more than a dozen steamers wintered in the Arctic, a practice deemed cheaper and more efficient than separate trips. During the late 1890s, steamers also dominated the Newfoundland whale fishery, which the newspaper on December 15, 1903, called "the greatest whale-hunting centre [sic] in the world...the whaling has been done almost wholly by steamers...which have had phenomenal success..." By December 4, 1906, steamers were so prevalent that the Whalemen's Shipping List said, "[I]n a few years, the stately sailing ship will be as extinct as the Dodo...and it is probable that two generations hence the full rigged windjammer will be but a memory of a slower and more poetic past."

The Golden Age of whaling was a boom time. The industry was gilded by the discovery of new whaling grounds and the development of new technologies to exploit those grounds. An industry with \$2 million in revenues in 1829 had \$10 million in revenues in 1851. It must have seemed to those in the industry that the sky was the limit.

Whales were everywhere. Whaleships traveled just about everywhere. An expanding and industrializing society provided a seemingly endless demand. The money seemed to flow from everywhere. The Golden Age feast fattened up those already in the industry and rang the bell for more to come to the table. Like any other feast, though, too much food gave the whalemens financial heartburn from which there was no long-term relief.

CHAPTER 4

FALL OF WHALING

Feast Becomes Famine

The discovery of new whaling grounds, the growing demand for whale products brought on by the Industrial Revolution, the inferior abilities of foreign whaling fleets, and the introduction of new technologies all contributed to record catches by an American whaling fleet of up to 735 vessels. The Golden Age feast of 1835-1860 fattened up the whalemén.

However, they soon shrunk back to size—and then some—when the boom busted. Underlying all that prosperity was the fact that the whales were disappearing. There only were so many areas for the whaleships to search and no technology could add more whales to the oceans. Whales reproduced slowly and could not sustain the voracious hunger of society for whale products. On February 14, 1860, the Whalemén's Shipping List said the Pacific whaling season of 1859 had been the worst in seven years and the fleet of 218 vessels would be reduced by 70, or nearly one-third, before the 1860 season. “Those who have the best opportunities for judging correctly think that this falling off will be permanent, since the whales are annually decreasing in number and size, particularly in the Kodiack [sic] and Ochotsk [sic] grounds.” That was a significant statement because the North Pacific was the prime hunting ground at that time. The newspaper also said the reduction could be more severe because some vessels still were in the South Pacific and “when the southern grounds have been cruised over by them and whales found scarce there, they would, as heretofore, return to the North Pacific.” A year later, on July 9, 1861, it said, “No fact concerning the Whale Fishery is more generally known and universally conceded than that the business has for several years been overdone, and prices have been maintained at two [sic] high a figure. This evil is working its own cure...”

The statistics backed up the newspaper's assessments. As stated earlier, the

western Arctic whaling grounds first were explored in 1848. That year, sperm oil imports were 107,976 barrels, down from 166,985 in 1843. By 1853, sperm oil imports were down to 103,077 barrels and, by 1858, down to 81,941 barrels. While much of this decline can be attributed to fewer whales, another factor was the decision by sperm whalers to head for the Arctic to hunt bowhead whales. So, less ships also contributed to lower imports.

Whale oil, a key product of the Arctic fishery, increased from 206,727 barrels in 1843 to 280,656 in 1848, the year of the Superior's voyage. However, imports fell to 260,114 in 1853 and 182,223 in 1858.

The real impact of declining populations could be seen in the level of whalebone imports. As stated earlier, bowheads possessed the longest baleen plates of any whales so whalebone became the prime product of the Arctic fishery. Imports in 1843 were 2,127,270 pounds and that decreased in 1848 to 2,003,000 pounds. The opening of the Arctic fishery sent imports skyrocketing to 5,652,300 pounds in 1853. Just five years later, however, imports dropped nearly 73% to 1,540,600 pounds. In its review of the 1858 season, the Whalemen's Shipping List said, "As compared with former years it has been generally unproductive, and in many cases disastrous, and there has been a consequent diminuation [sic] of the number of vessels and tonnage employed in the fleet." There also was no good news in the offing, since "[t]he prospects for the coming year are far from flattering," the newspaper said January 11, 1859.

So by the time 1859 arrived, the whale fishery had entered one of its many valleys, compared with the many peaks of the Golden Age. This year was significant for another reason, though, because 1859, in effect, marked the beginning of the end of the American whaling industry. The death would be long and slow, but the fatal blow was struck in 1859. Hundreds of miles inland from New Bedford, in northwestern Pennsylvania, a 40-year-old former railroad conductor spent much of that year drilling through rocks in search of petroleum. On August 27, 1859, Edwin L. Drake finally struck

oil—the petroleum kind—near Titusville, Pennsylvania. The funeral march for whaling had begun.

August 27, 1859, proved to be just one of several dates fatal to the New Bedford whaling fleet. The others were:⁶⁴

- April 12, 1861—The bombardment of Fort Sumter started the Civil War. By war's end in 1865, the whaling fleet had been decimated: 46 ships, including 25 from New Bedford, were lost during attacks by Confederate raiders and another 40, known as the Stone Fleet, were sunk to blockade the ports of Savannah, Georgia, and Charleston, South Carolina. More than half of the Stone Fleet, so named because the ships were filled with granite, was from New Bedford. In 1861, the whaling fleet had 514 vessels. In 1866, it had 263.
- September 12, 1871—Captains of 33 whalers abandoned ships in Arctic ice. The total loss was about \$1.1 million. Twenty-two of the vessels were from New Bedford.
- October 1876—Twelve whaling ships abandoned in Arctic ice. Fifty men died and the financial losses were more than \$800,000, according to some accounts.

When considered separately, the above dates were not significant enough to kill an entire industry. When considered together, though, they were. Those dates were the body punches that combined to knock the industry down for the count. That knockout took decades because the industry occasionally was infused with new life, such as immediately after the Civil War when demand for whale products was high at a time when stocks were low.

The Whalemen's Shipping List gave blow-by-blow coverage to those fateful events, frequently with tones of horror—such as when describing the Arctic disasters—or indignation—such as when describing Confederate raids on whalers. When it came to petroleum, the newspaper's coverage depended on the specifics. For example, news of general developments in Pennsylvania, such as new wells being dug or oil flow-rates,

was reported fairly. However, news of the growing popularity of petroleum, such as for lighting and lubrication, often was downplayed so as not to worry the whalers that their economic days were numbered. During these times, the newspaper engaged in self-preservation. The longer it held off the encroachment of petroleum into daily life, the better off the whaling industry was. The better off the whaling industry was, the better off the newspaper was because no readers + no advertisers = no newspaper.

As stated earlier, the Whalers's Shipping List was launched during the Golden Age of whaling, an age that proved extremely volatile. It almost was like the industry built a house on a shaky foundation. Every time it built an addition to that house—by discovering new whaling grounds or implementing new technologies—it did not give the foundation—whale stocks—time to adjust. So while the house may have looked good from a distance, a closer examination showed that the foundation was cracked and crumbling under the pressure. Fewer whales meant longer voyages and higher costs, which drove up the prices of oil and bone, and forced the search for cheaper substitutes. As the American population expanded, the demand for oil increased beyond the capacity of the whale fishery to supply it, which gave an extra boost to substitutes.

This crumbling infrastructure was evident even during the early days of the Whalers's Shipping List. Within seven months of its debut in 1843, the paper expanded from eight pages to twelve pages because of the “liberal patronage” it had received. Yet at the end of its first volume year on March 5, 1844, the newspaper raised its annual subscription price from \$1 to \$1.50 because of “a period of severe depression in the business of the Whale Fishery...” The price increase did not last long, but neither did the depression. By 1852, the newspaper worked to produce more copies of a larger edition but “we have yet been unable to supply the demand for extra copies. We have now made arrangements to strike off a still larger edition, sufficient we believe, to meet the increasing call.”

The good times did not last long. On October 28, 1856, the newspaper said there

was a “constantly increasing demand for oil for manufacturing and other purposes...which already exceeds the supply from the ocean.” However, while the fleet increased, their catch decreased, so prices increased. As a result, “[v]arious expedients have been resorted to to supply the deficiency,” the newspaper said. Those substitutes included oil from rosin, cotton seed, and bituminous coal. Two years later, the newspaper predicted that 44 of the 68 whalers expected to arrive at New Bedford that year would lose money because of the small amount of oil taken and the low market prices of oil and whalebone. That gloomy local forecast “may not be misapplied to the whaling fleet of the whole country,” the newspaper said February 9, 1858.

Besides reading these types of stories, another way to determine whether the business was in feast or famine was by examining the quantity of whaling stories in the Whalemen’s Shipping List. After the Golden Age ended, the newspaper’s share of whaling news dropped dramatically and was replaced by news irrelevant to whaling. For example, the March 19, 1861, issue contained stories about the consumption of rice in Asia, an increase in opium eating, the leading causes of death in Massachusetts (drowning was first), and the number of clocks made by a New Haven, Connecticut, clock company. By 1870, the paper published fiction, “believe it or not” crime and weather stories, census-type information on population and wealth, jokes, foreign news irrelevant to whaling, and tales of shipwrecks. Eventually, whaling stories outside of letters, the markets, and the shipping list appeared once every few months. On July 5, 1870, the newspaper said, “In future we shall devote more of our space to *original* [emphasis in original] reading matter—local and foreign. In doing so, we hope our efforts will be appreciated and our field in journalism expanded.” At this time, the shipping list covered the equivalent of just one page, as the entire fleet numbered 321 vessels. After 1873, the fleet never again went above 200 vessels. As the 19th century came to an end, readers would go months on end without seeing any whaling news, even through letters or market reports.

Black Gold

Many historians of whaling have offered different hypotheses as to why the industry declined and, ultimately, died in New Bedford. Some argued that Americans in the middle of the 18th century invested their capital in internal expansion and “the winning of the West offered far greater profits than did whaling and shipping.”⁶⁶ Others cited a decline in the quality of the crews, as more men joined the California gold rush and inexperienced foreigners took their places, and the corruption of consular agents charged with promoting the fishery.⁶⁶ Another factor in the debate was the general depression of 1857 that brought American industry to a standstill.⁶⁷ Generally, however, any obituary of American whaling must include the infiltration of petroleum products into the markets once reserved primarily for whale oil.

The use of petroleum dates back several centuries before Drake dug his well near Titusville, Pennsylvania. Native Americans were familiar with the substance because in 1627 a French missionary reported finding an oil spring near Cuba, New York. More oil springs were found along the banks of a stream that emptied into what is now the Allegheny River. There was evidence that the Native Americans, or a race preceding them, collected the oil from pits strengthened by logs. It was believed that the Native Americans used the petroleum for medicinal purposes. By the mid-18th century, European maps of the region included the word “petroleum” written over this region of North America. A few decades later those maps named that stream Oil Creek.

That is, when the nineteenth century opened it was known in this country as well as in England and France that in northwestern Pennsylvania and southwestern New York a substance called rock oil, or petroleum, flowed from springs. It had medicinal value, burned freely, giving a strong but smoky light, was useful as a grease; but its odor was so offensive that many doubted it would ever be widely used for either luminant or lubricant.⁶⁸

By the mid-19th century, the growing industrialization of the world—with its machinery, factories, railroads and steamships—put an ever-increasing demand on oil supplies. The chief source of that supply was the whale. Since demand exceeded supply,

prices increased to the point where sperm oil cost \$1.77 a gallon and whale oil 79¢ a gallon. These prices were too high for the average consumer, so research was conducted to find cheaper substitutes for lighting and lubrication. At first, most people used camphene, a highly explosive mixture of turpentine and alcohol. The search for safer substitutes led a British team of scientists in the 1840s to extract illuminating fuel from coal. Yet more research was needed to develop a lamp that would not smoke so much when burned, so the British coal oil was not widely sold until the mid-1850s.

Meanwhile, a Canadian geologist in 1846 developed a process for extracting an illuminating fuel from albertite. This fuel was called kerosene, which became a generic name for many lighting fluids, and by 1854 it was manufactured in New York City. The Whalemen's Shipping List described the operations of the new Brooklyn, New York, plant in its September 20, 1859, edition. Previously, the newspaper gave coverage to other whale-oil substitutes like gas, camphene, lard oil, tea oil, rosin oil and cottonseed oil. Much of that coverage, however, was not favorable to the substitute and obviously was aimed at boosting whale oil.

The first articles on substitutes appeared in 1852, when imports of all whale products declined significantly from the previous year. Four of those articles appeared in the same issue on June 29, 1852—an issue that seemed like a one-paper crusade against all substitutes. The first article, which actually was an editorial disguised as a letter from “O. Foggy,” set the tone for all future coverage of substitutes by the Whalemen's Shipping List. The piece, headlined “Gas In New Bedford,” prophesied doom for the whaling capital of the world. The article said the 1850s were a time of innovation when old customs broke up, old habits were abandoned, and novel manners were introduced. Even by 1852, it was trite to talk about steam and electricity, the newspaper said. “But there was one change which we own we hardly looked for... *The introduction of Gas into New Bedford* [emphasis in original]—that ancient city of the whale!” Gas soon would “shed its lurid light” over New Bedford, a remarkable situation because many New Bedforders

once formed a threatening mob when a man first spoke of substitutes like camphene, phosgene [sic], burning fluid, and vegetable oil. Now gas, “the murderous liquid,” was being used in homes where it would “in due time, burn, roast, scald, destroy, scorch, par-boil, and fry every individual member of them...”

Self-preservation is the prime law of Nature...If New Bedford cannot help herself, who will help her? And yet we see her pursuing the madly suicidal policy indicated in the caption of this lament. *Gas*—gas in New Bedford, the oil market of the earth! What an example to set the world! What a caving in! What a ridiculous concession to ridiculous fashion! Who will buy our commodity after this?...

As we reflect upon these humiliating vicissitudes, we seem to hear the laugh of the whales.

The letter continued that “Mr. Spermaceti” probably told a half-dozen of his wives to “spout in peace hereafter” because New Bedford used gas. The whales did not know what gas was, but they knew it was not blubber, the letter said.

Be we men and suffer this dishonor? Is our glory of so little consequence that we part with it in this nonchalant way?...

You may flare and flaunt your gas-lights never so bravely—they will only light our city to the tomb. In five years, we predict, she will be a bigger ruin than [sic] Carthage. The ships will be all gone, the inhabitants all dead, the whales will frisk and sport at their leisure, the *Shipping List* will be stopped—and what good we should like to ask will your gas-lights do you then?

O. FOGY

“O. Fogy,” otherwise known as Henry Lindsey, was surprisingly accurate in his assessment.

That same issue, the Whalemen’s Shipping List ran three articles on deadly accidents that involved substitutes. Two of the articles ran under the headline, “Beauties of Camphene,” and told of fatal accidents for a Baltimore, Maryland, boy and a Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, girl. Both burned to death when camphene exploded. The third article said a Mendon, Massachusetts, baker died from burns caused by an exploding can of “burning fluid.” Obviously, the newspaper was making its point through these articles. However, that point apparently fell on deaf ears because three months later the newspaper said the New Bedford Gas Works neared completion. That article on September 28, 1852, also represented a sea-change in the thinking of the newspaper, for

it commended the construction supervisor “for the energy and zeal he has displayed to supply our citizens thus [sic] early with an article so long and so generally desired.” New Bedford finally was lit with gas on February 5, 1853, which merited a one-sentence story in the Whalemen’s Shipping List.

The bad news was not reserved only for gas and camphene. Another substitute for whale oil was rosin oil, which was distilled from crude turpentine and produced thick smoke when burned. The August 2, 1853, issue told of a Newark, New Jersey, couple that was seriously burned by an exploding can of rosin oil. That apparently surprised the newspaper because “Rosin oil has been supposed not to be explosive.” Five years later, the newspaper reported that a rosin oil factory was constructed in Mobile, Alabama, to supply Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Mississippi, and South Carolina. In its defense of sperm oil, the newspaper on August 24, 1858, not only slapped the rosin oil business, but also the slavery policies of the former Confederate states.

Our Southern friends will be very likely to find this one of the *darkest* [emphasis in original] enterprises in which they have yet engaged. Unless the South desires to assimilate itself in color with its “human chattels” tauny [sic] and sooty, it will content itself with the present ‘limited’ use of Rosin Oil, and continue the use of our New Bedford staples—Sperm Oil and Candles, than which perhaps not even excepting gas,—nothing better has yet been found to answer the purposes of illumination.

That rallying cry for sperm oil echoed one made two years earlier in the newspaper’s most complete defense of whale products. A December 16, 1856, article began with a discussion of tea oil—obtained from the China tea plant and sold for \$1 a gallon—but evolved into a critique of all substitutes. The article said tea oil was fair for burning but worthless for lubricating, as were most substitutes that claimed public attention. Those substitutes included coal oil, Breckenridge oil, lard oil, bog oil, Payne’s oil, patent and camphene.

It is a fact, which time and experience have fully demonstrated, that no one substitute has yet been obtained bearing the minutest comparison with sperm oil...[I]n its purity it is not equalled for the purposes named by anything we have yet seen or heard of, and we entertain not the slightest fear that it will or ever can be.

The only problem, the newspaper said, was obtaining a supply large enough to meet the demand. That shortage resulted from longer voyages and their higher expenses, which scared off potential investors. Ironically, the newspaper did not say those longer voyages resulted from fewer whales. The future of the fishery looked bleak unless more favorable economic conditions developed, the article said. In 1856, the fleet had 635 vessels, a decrease of 100 since the peak fleet of a decade earlier. Within five years, it would decrease by another 121 vessels. Whale-product imports in 1856 were down significantly from just three years earlier: sperm oil imports dropped 21%, whale oil imports dropped 24%, and whalebone imports dropped by more than 54%, according to statistics in the Whalemen's Shipping List. Correspondingly, the prices of all three products increased by 30%, 38%, and 66%, respectively. So the search for cheaper substitutes became an active one.

One such search was reported by the Whalemen's Shipping List on August 9, 1859. A train on the Michigan Central Railroad traveled more than 21,500 miles with whale oil lubricating the journals on one side of the train and metallic oil lubricating journals on the other side. At that time, whale oil was 60¢ per gallon and metallic oil \$1.34 per gallon. The experiment showed that the journals lubricated by whale oil had less wear than those lubricated by metallic oil. Not only was whale oil better, but it also was cheaper, the newspaper said. "This well-conducted and accurate experiment...will doubtless save thousands of dollars annually to railway companies in the expense of oil," the newspaper said. The tone of the article appeared to be, "Score one for the home team." That lead would be very short-lived.

By the time of the railroad test, the residents of northwestern Pennsylvania habitually scooped what they could from their local oil springs and sold it for up to \$1 a gallon. In 1853, the Titusville, Pennsylvania, firm of Brewer, Watson and Company entered into the first petroleum-related lease in U.S. history. Under this lease, trenches were dug to channel liquid from the spring into a basin where the oil and water was

separated. This system collected up to six gallons a day for lighting mills and lubricating machines. The idea of drilling artesian wells in search of petroleum was devised by Drake and his fellow investors in the Seneca Oil Company. After a year of starts and stops, drillers in August 1859 reached a depth of more than 69 feet and then struck oil. In its first 24 hours the well produced about 25 barrels of crude oil. Drake's well eventually produced about 82,000 barrels, some of which sold for up to \$75 each.

A barrel of crude oil differed in quantity from a barrel of whale oil. A barrel of crude oil was 42 gallons and a barrel of whale oil was 31.5 gallons. This study will use gallons to compare the two industries.

The news of Drake's oil strike caused a rush not unlike that experienced by California in the 1840s. By December 31, 1859, Drake's single well, which was the entire United States oil industry, produced 84,000 gallons of crude that sold for an average price of about 38¢ a gallon for total revenues of \$32,000. One year later, 202 wells produced 21 million gallons that sold for an average price of about 23¢ a gallon for total revenues of \$4.8 million. By 1864, 634 wells produced 88.9 million gallons of crude oil at about 24¢ a gallon for total revenues of about \$20.9 million.⁶⁹ The 1864 revenues were more than 653 times greater than the revenues of just five years before. "With one stride, indeed, the whole territory was virtually thrown open to development...and all the intermediate territory for sixteen miles along the narrow valley of Oil Creek was soon taken up."⁷⁰

By comparison, the whaling industry in 1859 imported about 2.9 million gallons of sperm oil at an average price of about \$1.36 per gallon; about 6 million gallons of whale oil at 48.5¢ per gallon; and more than 1.9 million pounds of whalebone at 88¢ per pound. Whaling industry revenues for 1859 were more than \$8.5 million⁷¹, while petroleum industry revenues, as stated above, were \$32,000. In 1864, whaling industry revenues were more than \$8.1 million while petroleum industry revenues were \$20.9 million. Entrepreneurs on land never looked back at their colleagues on the seas.

The first mention of the Pennsylvania oil rush in the Whalemen's Shipping List occurred on October 4, 1859, about six weeks after Drake's strike. The story gave the background of the Seneca Oil Company operations and then said Drake's well, "to the surprise and joy of every one," was yielding 400 gallons of crude per day. The method of extraction was a pump that poured five gallons of liquid into a vat every minute. The oil then rose to the top while the water ran out the bottom of the vat. Production was scheduled to reach 1,200 gallons a day when a new pump was brought in, the newspaper said. The story understandably was low-key, considering that the ramifications for the whaling industry were not yet understood. Four months later, the newspaper sang a different tune. On February 28, 1860, the newspaper said:

The excitement in Venango County, respecting the discovery of oil springs, has reached a height in the immediate neighborhood, almost equal to that which swept the country just after the discovery of gold in California. The price of land has gone up to almost fabulous prices...

The country for miles around indicate that the oil can be obtained at almost any spot where it is bored for, and it is probable that before mid summer, there will hardly be an acre but what will be staked off as a site for oil.

This description, with a few word substitutions, likely would have depicted accurately the rush for sperm whales off New England in the 1720s or the rush for bowhead whales in the western Arctic in the late 1840s and early 1850s. The newspaper then hinted, unknowingly, of the whaling industry's impending doom.

The oil, it is proper to state, is the kerosene or coal oil, and is admirably adapted for lighting or lubricating purposes. If success continues to follow the efforts of the workers it is highly probable that the oil will become an important article of commerce to Western Pennsylvania.

On September 4, 1860, the newspaper said the largest oil well in Pennsylvania was drilled a mile below "Sittersvill." and yielded more than 200 barrels a day. It must have been apparent by then to New Bedforders—residents of what used to be the richest city per capita in the world—that petroleum was there to stay. In fact, that was the year that Weston Howland, a member of a prominent whaling family in New Bedford, purchased Fish Island and erected an oil refinery there in the shadow of the whaling

capital of the world. By the end of the year, he “placed on the market the first refined burning oil distilled from the products of the oil fields of Pennsylvania...”⁷²

Regardless, the newspaper maintained its longstanding defense of whale oil over substitutes. On July 3, 1860, the newspaper reported that a whale-oil lamp was invented “that promises to throw Kerosene oil into the shade.” The lamp burned for 80 hours on 1 gallon of whale oil. Whale oil sold for an average of 44¢ per gallon that year so the lamp cost slightly more than a half a cent an hour to burn, which was “cheap enough in all conscience.” Also, the lamp was smokeless and odorless—two big advantages over kerosene. “If genius keeps developing itself in lights, we shall soon have one offered us that will trim itself and pay dividends to the owners,” the newspaper said. Four months later, the newspaper updated readers on the progress of New Bedford’s “Fund for Rewards to Inventors of Lamps for burning Whale Oil.” The fund’s committee offered \$4,500 in premiums to the inventor of the best lamp for burning whale oil. On November 20, 1860, the Whalemen’s Shipping List said the committee tested entrants for two weeks but could not decide which one was best. Several were promising, however, so the committee gave those inventors more money to refine their inventions. “The committee are [sic] convinced that Whale Oil may be burned to great advantage, compared with any other article now in use...[T]hey believe that Bleached Winter Whale Oil will give a better and cheaper light than any article now in use,” the newspaper said. Similar stories appeared for many more years.

It was not until 1861 that the significance of the Pennsylvania oil fields became clear to the readers of the Whalemen’s Shipping List, although the newspaper did its best to downplay that significance. That year, 392 wells produced more than 88.2 million gallons of crude but the price plummeted to 49¢ a barrel because of overproduction and the outbreak of the Civil War. Revenues were slightly more than \$1 million, which was a 75% decrease from the year before. Whaling industry revenues that year were more than \$5.4 million, which itself was a 17% decrease from the year before. On January 15, 1861,

the newspaper said, “The last accounts from the Tidioute [Island] oil regions are decidedly Sinbad-the-Sailorish.” The article continued that the largest oil vein in the region was struck the month before and “the tops of large trees near by are covered with oil, and the workmen state that the stream of oil went into the air far above the tops of the trees...” At last count, the well produced 500 barrels of oil a day with a total value of \$4,400. Tidioute, Pennsylvania, was one of the boom towns: “Up the Allegheny around Tidioute, the excitement over new wells was at fever heat...Oil speculators overran the town, everyone seemed half crazy...”⁷³ Eventually, more productive wells were dug elsewhere and the town became a storage site for more than 100,000 barrels of crude oil. A month later, the newspaper published an article headlined, “Considerable Humbug About Coal Oil.” Coal oil was another name for kerosene. That story quoted a “practical gentleman...who thinks there is a negative side to the great grease question.” The gentleman said more than half of the wells dug so far were failures and many, if not all, of the wells dried up after a short time. This gentleman also said there was “a systematic scheme to inflate this oil fever by a company who have [sic] obtained possession of the land in the vicinity, and who are really the only persons that are making money out of the operation,” the newspaper said on February 19, 1861. The oil company was not named and it is now difficult to speculate which one was referred to because by 1864 there were 543 oil companies in the United States with a total capital of about \$360 million.⁷⁴

On March 5, 1861, the Whalemen’s Shipping List surprisingly reversed course and gave the industry its due in a reprint from the Pittsburgh Post. As stated earlier, the Whalemen’s Shipping List regularly reprinted articles from other newspapers. That was a common practice of the time since wire services, which now perform that function for newspapers, were in their infancy and really only serviced the New York City newspapers. What was significant about the reprints in the Whalemen’s Shipping List was that, upon examination, a reader could tell whether or not the newspaper agreed with the premise of the article. For example, the newspaper often stated its disbelief or doubts

about certain claims, as evidenced by the above article that described the Pennsylvania oil claims as “Sinbad-the-Sailorish.” So the newspaper did not hesitate to editorialize when it felt the need to, although its methods were quite different from those of the mainstream press today. The counter to that argument is that the Whalemen’s Shipping List did not dispute opinions it agreed with. So an opinion reprinted in the Whalemen’s Shipping List without any dispute was an opinion agreeable to the newspaper’s publishers. The March 5, 1861, article in question said, “People at a distance have little idea of the magnitude of the oil business in Western Pennsylvania.” Although Philadelphia businessmen believed the business was speculative and chimerical, Pittsburgh businessmen knew otherwise. Oil already was a prominent industry that became more prominent by the day, the article said. “We regard it as a fixed fact that the oil business is destined to become one of the greatest trades of Western Pennsylvania, and it will not be many years before ‘our substantial oil men’ will rank with ‘our substantial iron men’ on the score of wealth,” the article said. The oil men soon surpassed any of the financial heights reached by, or imagined by, the whalemen. The stakes went even higher as time went on, which apparently convinced Philadelphians. On April 9, 1861, the Whalemen’s Shipping List quoted the Philadelphia North American’s prediction that oil revenues from northwestern Pennsylvania would reach \$3 million that year. (As stated earlier, revenues for that year only barely reached \$1 million.) The article said the production levels of 500-600 barrels a day sustained 90 miles of railroad tracks and triggered the building of a 20-mile branch road to the oil fields.

The above articles exemplified the piecemeal approach that the Whalemen’s Shipping List originally took toward the burgeoning petroleum industry in western Pennsylvania. The individual pieces were discussed, but the bigger picture ignored. That is, until a reprint from the New York Journal of Commerce appeared in the July 2, 1861, issue. That article, above any other that discussed crude oil, laid it on the line for the whalemen and, in no uncertain terms, described the ruinous effect crude oil had on the

businesses of catching whales and selling their oil. Although the Whalemen's Shipping List published the article, a short preface said the article was a "somewhat overcharged statement of decline in our great staple..."

The article said the discovery and manufacture of kerosene "has had a most ruinous effect upon the whaling interest." New Bedford's business had dropped by one-third during the past three years and was predicted to drop another third during the current year. (In 1859, New Bedford had 316 whaleships, or 51% of the United States fleet. By 1864, New Bedford had 197 whaleships, or 65% of the fleet. The years 1859-1864 saw New Bedford's fleet decrease by almost 38%.) The article said more than 50 whaleships sat idle at New Bedford's wharves and only one vessel fitted out during the busiest season of the year. Several whaleships withdrew from the fleet, and notices of similar withdrawals soon became a regular feature of the Whalemen's Shipping List, and still others were sold to the Union government as part of the Stone Fleet. That fleet will be discussed later in this study. The article said oil cost 60¢ per gallon to produce but the market paid only 40¢ per gallon. (Sperm oil averaged almost \$1.32 a gallon that year but whale oil averaged about 44¢ a gallon.) Because of those low prices, "thousands of casks, which have accumulated while the owners have been holding on for better prices, are stowed away in sheds and covered with seaweed." The same depression hit Fairhaven, Massachusetts; New London, Connecticut; and Honolulu in the Sandwich Islands. Despite all this economic doom-and-gloom, the article still managed to find a silver lining.

To New Bedford, which has been built up and fostered chiefly by the whale fishery, this decline of the business will be a serious calamity; though the whales themselves will undoubtedly be grateful for the discovery of the oil which is fast superseding that hitherto supplied by themselves.⁷⁵

Indeed, a chart that followed the article said sperm oil imports for the year, as of July 1, were 35,133 barrels, a drop of 10% from the 39,181 barrels imported at the same time the year before. Whale oil imports were 83,160 barrels, a 26% drop from the

previous year's 112,750 barrels. Whalebone imports were 807,600 pounds, a 21% drop from the more than 1 million pounds imported at the same time the year before. Eventually, all imports of whale products in 1861 declined from 1860 totals: sperm oil dropped 6%, whale oil dropped 4%, and whalebone dropped 22%. In addition, the imports for 1860 had decreased from those of 1859. So the trend in the whale fishery was downward.

At the same time, the trend in the petroleum industry was upward. As of December 31, 1859, the U.S. petroleum industry consisted of one well that produced, up to that point, 2,000 barrels of oil worth \$32,000. The average price of a barrel was \$16. Since a barrel of oil contained 42 gallons, the price was about 38¢ per gallon. Sperm oil at that time averaged about \$1.36 per gallon and whale oil about 49¢ per gallon.

As of December 31, 1869, the U.S. petroleum industry consisted of 3,737 wells that annually produced 4.2 million barrels of oil worth \$23.7 million. The average price per barrel was \$5.63 and the average price per gallon was about 13¢. Sperm oil for that year averaged \$1.78 per gallon and whale oil about \$1.02. Obviously, consumers wanted the cheaper oil.

Even the international market, long a strong point for the whale fishery, shifted in favor of petroleum. In 1858, when there was no United States petroleum industry, the whale fishery exported 105,084 gallons of sperm oil and more than 614,000 gallons of whale oil.

In 1868, the United States petroleum industry exported about 68 million gallons of kerosene, about 10 million gallons of crude oil, about 1.5 million gallons of gasoline, and no lubricating oil.⁷⁶ The whale fishery exported about 587,000 gallons of sperm oil and more than 311,000 gallons of whale oil, according to the newspaper.

The new industry not only had an unusual growth, but exerted a marked influence upon the world. Coming into existence at a time when the problem of cheap artificial light was becoming serious, the principal refined product, kerosene, had everywhere displaced all other means of illumination except gas. It was cheap, efficient, and safe.⁷⁷

Coverage of the petroleum industry virtually disappeared from the pages of the Whalemen's Shipping List during the 1860s, but so did, for that matter, coverage of the whaling industry. Obviously, the newspaper devoted much of the first half of the decade to coverage of the Civil War. However, even after the war ended, the newspaper's pages were filled mostly by general news and fiction. Petroleum-related news of any note did not appear again until February 24, 1874, when the newspaper said about 1 million barrels of crude oil were stored in tanks within the Titusville, Pennsylvania, oil region. In addition, there were countless small tanks located near the wells and those tanks had no fire protection, an obvious reference to the deadly blazes that plagued the petroleum industry during its early days. On July 27, 1875, the newspaper, in another seeming contradiction, said the United States controlled the world petroleum market through both greater quantity and superior quality of product, along with the greater enterprise of American businessmen. The newspaper pointed out that even the Sandwich Islands, "the headquarters of the sperm oil business, are regular customers for the article..." By then, the industry generated \$50 million a year, a figure exceeded only by revenues for cotton, grain and provisions, the newspaper said.

The next year saw a spate of petroleum-related articles within a three-month span. On July 25, 1876, the newspaper said the oil region of Pennsylvania "has dropped out of general notice" but business there still was brisk, as 195 wells were bored the previous month and those wells produced an average of 14 barrels a day. On August 22, 1876, the Whalemen's Shipping List ran three articles on petroleum. The first merely said the Pennsylvania oil regions had 484 storage tanks with a total capacity of almost 6.3 million barrels. The second said a group of oil companies in that region developed plans to build an oil pipeline from western Pennsylvania to the Atlantic seaboard. However, the companies had not decided whether to terminate the pipeline in Baltimore, Maryland, or Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. The cost of the 300-mile pipeline was estimated at \$1.25 million but transportation costs were estimated at just 17¢ per barrel, compared with

railroad transportation costs of nearly 30¢ per barrel. The average cost of a barrel of crude oil in 1876 was \$2.52, or 6¢ per gallon. Sperm oil in 1876 sold for an average of about \$1.41 per gallon and whale oil 61¢ per gallon.⁷⁸ So, even with the higher railroad transportation costs factored in, crude oil still was a bargain compared with whale oil.

The third article of that issue discussed paraffine, a hard, white, wax-like by-product of crude oil most commonly used in chandlery. It also was used in adulterating beeswax and, eventually, making matches, preserving foods and meats, improving the flammability of timber, and waterproofing. The article said the Pennsylvania region produced 1.5 million gallons of crude oil in 1860 but since increased production to 300 million gallons, much of which was converted to paraffine, naphtha, coal-tar, and kerosene.

Two weeks later, on September 5, 1876, the newspaper said the petroleum industry had rebounded. Stocks that laid in storage now sold because domestic consumption increased by 40% from the previous year while foreign consumption increased by 20%. Daily shipments to market totaled 37,000 barrels while production peaked at 26,000 barrels. On September 26, 1876, the newspaper said the region's value increased by \$25 million in just three months. By now, readers of the Whalemen's Shipping List knew that the New Bedford, and American, whaling industry's days were numbered.

Even the staunchest non-believers must have surrendered when the newspaper reported on August 6, 1878, that petroleum had been discovered 35 miles outside of Los Angeles, California. Five wells produced an average of 80 barrels a day with the refined product transported to San Francisco, the leading Pacific whaling port, via "patent oil tanks." Five weeks later, the Whalemen's Shipping List said petroleum products were used "for nearly every mechanical process for which animal oils have heretofore been used..." Substitutes had hammered the final nail into the coffins of sperm oil and whale oil.

The date of opening the first oil well in Pennsylvania may be regarded as the day when the fate of the whale fishery was decided. Even in the face of the other unfavorable conditions, the fishery must certainly have prospered but for the discovery of petroleum...The struggle for supremacy was fierce but short and ended in the only way it could—in favor of the better, more easily obtained and then seemingly inexhaustible kerosene.”

The Civil War

That economic struggle by the whale fishery was hampered by the Civil War, which erupted just two years after Drake struck oil in 1859. The Civil War crippled the whaling fleet through the destruction of 46 whaleships, 25 of which were from New Bedford, by Confederate steamers and the sinking of another 40 whaleships, 25 of which were from New Bedford, to blockade the Confederate ports of Savannah, Georgia, and Charleston, South Carolina. Also, many of the men who hunted whales were on the battlefields. So, as the whale fishery defended itself against the onslaughts of the petroleum industry, one of its hands was tied by the Civil War. “The war of the rebellion came with a suddenness that was entirely unexpected to the larger portion of the people of the North...No special commercial interest was in a poorer state to withstand war than the whale-fishery.”⁸⁰ First, whalemens still were recovering from the general United States depression of 1857 when the war broke out four years later. Second, whaleships were at sea for years and some of those vessels did not know that a war had erupted. When they found out, they had two choices: sail back to port and wait out the war, or stay at sea and risk capture by the Confederacy. The former option was similar to pouring money down the drain. The latter option was amplified by the fact that the Confederacy did not have much of a naval fleet at the time the war broke out, so one of its earliest priorities was to capture Union vessels and fly them under Confederate flags. Those choosing to sail paid enormous insurance rates as a result. At that time, New England also was the shipping capital of the United States so most of the shipowners sided with the Union. On the positive side, the war sent the prices of whale products skyrocketing to their highest levels ever at that time. The rockets crashed at war’s end when prices plummeted and

thus ruined many shipowners.⁸¹

April 12, 1861, was the date the Confederacy bombarded Fort Sumter and triggered the Civil War. At that time, the whaling fleet had 514 vessels and sperm oil sold for almost \$1.32 per gallon, whale oil about 44¢ per gallon, and whalebone 66¢ per pound, according to the newspaper. On April 15, 1861, war became official through a proclamation by U.S. President Abraham Lincoln. An analysis of the Civil War is outside the bounds of this study. What is important to this study is that the Civil War first was mentioned by the Whalemen's Shipping List on April 16, 1861, when it published a "Notice to Mariners" from the Confederacy that all ships which entered Confederate ports after May 1, 1861, had to pay a duty of 5¢ per ton, per entry. However, ships that entered more than once during a three-month span paid that duty only once. That duty was approved March 16, 1861, by the Confederate Congress.

The first major development of the war that affected the whaling fleet was the decision to organize the Stone Fleet. A lead-in to that decision was a July 16, 1861, article that supported a plan to sell whaleships to the government for use in the war. The article, which quoted a letter written to a Philadelphia newspaper by a Col. Forney of Washington, D.C., said such a plan not only was good for the government because it was quicker than building new ships, but it also was good for the shipping fleet: "No interest has suffered more seriously in the present crisis than the shipping interest, and if this idea could be carried out, it would not only provide a permanent security for the government itself, but restore activity to a class of trade that has languished under the pressure of times," the article said. Again, as stated earlier, the Whalemen's Shipping List often reprinted articles from other newspapers. Typically, if the Whalemen's Shipping List objected to a hypothesis, it stated so. No comment by the newspaper on that particular opinion meant it approved.

A second lead-in came August 13, 1861, when the Whalemen's Shipping List said Union attempts to blockade Confederate ports were inefficient. "The privateers snap their

fingers at our cumbersome war vessels which can approach only within miles of the coast, and merchant ships are captured not unfrequently in full view of government vessels..." the article said. It also said the Navy Department had turned its full attentions to solving this dilemma and would "expeditiously complete all necessary arrangements for giving efficiency to the Blockade." The eventual plan called for the sacrifice of 40 whaleships. Finding willing sellers was not difficult since the government paid more than the shipowners likely would make from whaling.

By this time, the pages of the Whalemen's Shipping List were full of war news, often contained in a separate section headlined "War News" or "The War." These sections contained casualty reports, battle news, proclamations issued by and laws passed by both sides, and even an explanation of the layout of Washington, D.C., and the troop deployments there. On August 20, 1861, the newspaper published Lincoln's proclamation that declared the Confederacy to be in a state of insurrection, ended all trade between the two sides, and seized all Confederate-owned property in the Union.

It is not known exactly when the Union hatched the plan to sink whaleships, but it commenced buying such ships in September 1861. The November 26, 1861, issue of the Whalemen's Shipping List listed 24 whaleships—11 from New Bedford—sold to the Union government: "They were all loaded with stone and filled with valves in their bottoms for sinking. The whole fleet...sailed on Wednesday last under sealed orders. They are to be used for blockading purposes on the Southern Coast," the newspaper reported. The Union apparently did not keep the blockade a secret. On December 10, 1861, the newspaper reported that another seven old whalers were purchased by the Union government, loaded with stone at New Bedford for blockading purposes, and launched the day before. Five of those ships were from New Bedford and the other two were from Newport, Rhode Island. That same issue, the newspaper detailed the names, tonnage, and purchasing ports for 20 vessels in the Stone Fleet. It also said the destination of the second group of ships was Charleston, South Carolina.

By this time the first fleet of stone ships is quietly deposited in the Savannah river [sic], and the history of the city of Savannah as a commercial emporium is terminated. Charleston harbor, by a similar process, will have terminated its career as a Southern port before two weeks elapse.

Meanwhile, the plan to occupy a portion of the Florida railroad was nearly complete and the Union soon would control every major port on the East Coast, the newspaper said.

Below that article was a brief notice from a Richmond, Virginia, newspaper that a large number of ships passed “Charleston bar” and perhaps those were the 20 old whalers referred to in the Union papers. That assumption was correct since those were the vessels headed to Georgia.

The success of the Stone Fleet was less than that hoped for. The ships were loaded with granite and sunk, but they sunk so far into the harbor bottoms that the Confederate privateers had no problems navigating in and out of port. That failure was confirmed in a January 7, 1862, article headlined “The Non-Efficiency of the Stone Blockade.” That article said strong east winds shattered the masts of the whaleships, which protruded above the surface, and sands covered the sinking hulks. “A much more efficient mode, and that, too, feared by the rebels, is to place a battery of long range rifles on a good ship, and let the vessel keep within damaging distance....,” the article said. Sunken whaleships would be more effective in blocking the numerous small inlets along the southeastern coast, the article concluded. The Stone Fleet never was mentioned again in the newspaper.

The more dramatic blows to the whaling fleet were the attacks by Confederate steamers, particularly the Alabama and Shenandoah. Their actions not only aroused Union anger against the Confederacy, but also Union anger against Britain for selling the steamers in the first place. Ultimately, in 1872, an international tribunal ordered Britain to pay \$15.5 million in reparations to American shipowners for damages caused by those vessels.⁸²

The first mention by the Whalemens's Shipping List of Confederate raids on the whaling fleet came on July 23, 1861, when it reported that seven vessels were captured by the Sumter and sent to Cuba. The Sumter was captained by Raphael Semmes, formerly of the United States Navy, and traveled at 14 knots an hour, a speed that few Union steamers matched. The Sumter also had an armament of up to eight 68-pound guns "and is no doubt seeking to make prize of a California steamer," the newspaper said. Semmes later became captain of the Alabama. That story gave whalemens something to worry about. Their fears came true in the January 28, 1862, issue when it was reported that the Sumter burned three vessels at sea, including the whaling bark Eben Dodge of New Bedford. That ship alone was worth \$16,000. The crews of the three ships were taken to Cadiz, the newspaper said.

The Alabama dominated the news for weeks as it went on a spree of burning any whaling vessel it captured. Unfortunately for the whalemens, their vessels were sitting ducks because they simply could not outrun the steamer. On October 14, 1862, the Whalemens's Shipping List said "our community was startled" that five whalers, including the Ocmulgee of Edgartown, Massachusetts, had been captured off Flores in the Western Islands on September 5, 1862, and burned. The perpetrator was the "rebel privateer" Alabama, although the newspaper first identified it as the 290. The Ocmulgee was 458 tons, was valued at \$32,000, and lost its cargo of 250 barrels of sperm oil. Its insurance did not cover the war, so the vessel was a total loss. The newspaper said "great anxiety of course prevails...in relation to the whole Atlantic fleet cruising about the Western Islands, as at the date of the capture of the Ocmulgee, a large number of them would be touching at Fayal to land oil, and obtain recruits." On October 21, 1862, the newspaper published a list of 10 ships, including the Ocmulgee, destroyed by the Alabama. Nine of those ships, four of which hailed from New Bedford, were valued at a combined \$203,000, while the value of the 10th was unknown. The newspaper said the crews of those ships "have probably all been landed at the Western Islands..." On

October 28, 1862, the newspaper described the poor treatment of prisoners by the Alabama, the steamer's preference for stealing certain items, and the difficulty of catching the steamer even though the Union fleet knew his attack plans. A week later, the newspaper relayed stories from crewmen of the eight vessels destroyed by the Alabama. The crewmen eventually landed in Boston. Obviously, the Alabama was by now a household word, at least in the households of whalemens and shipowners. In fact, a small notice in the November 11, 1862, edition said New Bedford shipowners passed a resolution that asked the United States government to force Britain to reimburse them for damages caused by the Alabama. In its forecast for the 1863 whaling season, the Whalemens's Shipping List on January 13, 1863, said, "That Southern pirate, Semmes, has already made frightful havoc with whaling vessels, and his piratical ship—the Alabama—threatens to become the scourge of the seas."

As stated earlier, the British sold the Alabama, along with its efficient partner the Shenandoah, to the Confederacy after the outbreak of war. The British government was under fire from the United States for allowing those sales to occur and that connection first was discussed by the Whalemens's Shipping List on April 21, 1863. The newspaper said even the British people were dissatisfied with the revelations, as evidenced by an article in the Saturday Review, which the newspaper said was "among the most bitter assailants of our Government." The Saturday Review, according to the newspaper, said, "England has every proper motive to do right in this matter...prudence would bid us wish that the measures taken to prevent the building of ships-of-war in neutral ports should be as stringent as possible..."

The situation exploded in the newspaper two months later with three articles appearing in one issue. The lead story that June 2, 1863, said three more whalers and another New Bedford merchant ship were captured and burned by the Alabama. That article also said nine ships that were captured by the Confederacy had a total value of \$1.1 million. The second article followed up on the thoughts articulated earlier by the

Saturday Review. It was a reprint from the New York Commercial Advertiser that doubted reports England allowed two more Confederate-owned steamers to leave its ports. The New York paper based its conclusions on “good authority” that “one high in the Queen’s confidence” expressed regrets to the United States government over the Alabama and that official also vowed to prevent a similar reoccurrence. The article said the British certainly were aware that such tactics could be used against them in the future, so they unlikely used such tactics against the Union. As this paper will show, the New York newspaper’s conclusions were wrong because those two other vessels were the Florida and the Shenandoah. The third article, headlined “Work of the Confederate Privateers,” said 106 Union merchant vessels were captured by the Confederates up to that point. The damages just from the attacks by the Florida and Alabama totaled \$8 million, including vessels and cargoes. Those damages were much higher than those caused earlier in the war by steamers like the Sumter because those earlier steamers attacked smaller vessels engaged in coastwise trade. The Alabama, Florida and Shenandoah, on the other hand, targeted the larger whaleships on years-long voyages with plenty of supplies and cargo on board.

The controversy over British construction of the Confederate steamers reached a head in March 1864, according to the Whalemen’s Shipping List. In its March 15, 1864, edition, the newspaper said Secretary of State William Seward notified the British government that the United States government claimed indemnity from Britain for spoiliations committed by the Alabama and other steamers which preyed upon American commerce. The newspaper said the issue was “very justly deemed one of the most important questions that have [sic] ever arisen between the two countries...” The British claimed the U.S. argument was invalid because if those ships indeed came from British ports, they outfitted surreptitiously and without the knowledge of the British government. A precedent for the U.S. claim involved British claims against France in 1793, the article said. As stated earlier, the United States won its claim and Britain was forced to pay

\$15.5 million in reparations to those who suffered financial losses because of the steamer attacks. News concerning the United States' claims became a regular feature of the Whalemen's Shipping List into the late 1870s and early 1880s.

When the news of those claims reached Britain, many of its subjects filed counterclaims against the Union for vessels and cargoes seized during Union blockades of Confederate ports. The August 16, 1864, issue of the Whalemen's Shipping List said about 450 claims of indemnity were made by British subjects, although many of those claims later were ruled frivolous, the newspaper said. The newspaper then lashed out at the British government for not honoring Union blockades and for not discouraging British subjects from illicitly trading with the Confederacy. The British government supported this trade because it gained revenues from it, the newspaper said. Britain had a responsibility to stop the Confederate steamers because such action was "so clearly demanded by justice and the spirit of international law, and so plainly corresponding to the uniform practice of our Government towards England, when she was at war and we were at peace," the newspaper said. It then said Britain would regret its conduct.

The North is justly aggrieved at the partisan stand taken by England; at her numberless acts of unfriendliness in furnishing aid and comfort to the enemy, to say nothing of the exultation manifested at the disasters which has overtaken the Republic. The record of her course during our troubles, may be obscured for a time, by the necessities of mercantile interests, but it cannot be effaced, and we fear that it is destined to exercise a baneful influence upon the future relations of the two countries.

Strong words, indeed, and perhaps the strongest issued during the Civil War by the Whalemen's Shipping List. Immediately below those words was a notice that another "rebel steamer"—the Tallahassee—sank several ships off Sandy Hook, New York, after it escaped from detention at Wilmington, North Carolina.

The Alabama eventually was sunk in 1864 by the Union ship Kearsarge, but the event, oddly enough, received no mention whatsoever in the pages of the Whalemen's Shipping List. However, a new villain emerged to keep those pages occupied. That villain was the Shenandoah and what made her so despicable to the Union was the fact that she

destroyed Union ships even after Gen. Robert E. Lee had surrendered, thus ending the Civil War, on April 9, 1865. “The story of the Confederate raider Shenandoah...is surely one of the strangest—and most destructive—chapters in the history of American whaling.”⁸³

The Shenandoah sailed for Atlantic whaling grounds in October 1864 and immediately burned whatever ships she came across. One of the methods employed was to remove the crew from a captured whaler and then burn the ship. When other whaleships in the area, not knowing the steamer was there, responded to see if they could help, those ships also were captured and burned. The Shenandoah first made news in the Whalemen’s Shipping List in August 1865, when it rampaged its way through the Arctic. On August 1, 1865, the newspaper reported that the steamer destroyed eight whaleships—six from New Bedford and two from San Francisco—in the Arctic Ocean the previous June and planned to eliminate the entire Arctic fleet of 60. The losses of the New Bedford ships alone totaled \$237,000, of which only \$116,425 was covered by insurance. A ninth ship, the Milo of New Bedford, had been captured but was released with the crewmen from the torched ships and sent to San Francisco. The newspaper then told the following news, which must have infuriated those who read it: “The commander was informed of Lee’s surrender, and of the collapse of the rebellion, but he said he did not believe it. He believed in President Lincoln’s assassination, for he expected it.” The newspaper then said some of the whalemen had joined the crew of the steamer.

On August 22, 1865, the newspaper published a first-hand account of the Shenandoah’s tactics by a seaman from one of the captured ships. A week later, under the headline “Further Destruction of Whaleships!”, the newspaper reported that 15 more whaleships—10 of which were from New Bedford—were destroyed by the steamer but two other whaleships, also from New Bedford, were bonded and released. The newspaper was fed up.

As we expect to hear of the destruction of many more ships by this scoundrel of a pirate, we will not make any comments until the wind up of his

career. Our best wishes for him and his crew are, that they may be wrecked upon an Arctic shore and left at the mercy of whalers he has robbed.

Those wishes would not be granted. The next several months brought reports of Shenandoah sightings and speculations about her next destination—China? Australia? Mexico?—but the best news was saved for November 28, 1865. That issue told of the surrender of the Shenandoah in Liverpool, England, three weeks earlier and also quoted its captain, James Waddell, saying he only heard of the war's end on August 30, 1865, from a British vessel and then "immediately consigned the guns to the hold and steered for Liverpool..." As stated earlier, Waddell was informed of the war's end by his victims in June 1865 but he refused to believe them. The steamer was reportedly low on supplies when it docked and three sailors died during its voyage. The captain and crew were released on parole by British naval authorities, the newspaper said. Waddell would be heard from again. The February 20, 1866, issue quoted a letter from Waddell, who was in exile in Waterloo, England, that described his attacks and chastised the South for surrendering.

So ends my naval career, and I am called a 'pirate!' I made New England suffer, and I do not regret it. I cannot be condemned by any honest, thinking man...

As for Raphael Semmes, captain of the Alabama, he was arrested in December 1865 at his home in, fittingly, Alabama while reading a newspaper. The January 9, 1866, Whalers's Shipping List said Semmes protested his arrest on the grounds that he already had been paroled for his actions during the war. Nonetheless, Semmes was taken to Washington, D.C., and jailed in the Navy Yard, the newspaper said.

So ended one of the most destructive periods in the history of the American, and particularly New Bedford, whaling fleet. On January 1, 1861, the entire fleet had 514 vessels that weighed a combined 158,745 tons. On January 1, 1866, the fleet had 263 vessels that weighed 68,535 tons. So, within a five-year span, the fleet lost 49% of its vessels and 57% of its tonnage. Attacks by Confederate steamers and the sinking of the

Stone Fleet eliminated 86 whaleships, or 17% of the fleet. Of those 86 whaleships, 50 were from New Bedford. On January 1, 1861, New Bedford had 301 whaleships. On January 1, 1866, New Bedford had 164. That was almost a 46% decrease in five years. In 1860, New Bedford had a valuation of \$24,196,138. In 1865, its valuation was \$20,525,790. This diminution was largely due to the effect of the war upon the whaling industry.⁸⁴ The body punches took their toll on the whale fishery and New Bedford was the part of the body that hurt the most.

Arctic Disasters

Again, the end of the war injected new life into the industry because decreased supplies and increased demand created increased prices. In 1861, the whaling fleet imported 68,932 barrels of sperm oil, 133,717 barrels of whale oil, and slightly more than 1 million pounds of whalebone. The average annual prices were about \$1.32 per gallon of sperm oil, about 44¢ per gallon of whale oil, and 66¢ per pound of whalebone. In 1865, the fleet imported 32,242 barrels of sperm oil, 76,238 barrels of whale oil, and 619,350 pounds of whalebone. The average annual prices were \$2.25 per gallon of sperm oil, \$1.45 per gallon of whale oil, and \$1.71 per pound of whalebone. These high prices put whaleships back in the water. The fleet had 312 vessels in 1867, 329 in 1868, 336 in 1869, and 321 in 1870. From 1865-1867, sperm oil imports increased by 35%, whale oil imports increased by 17%, and whalebone imports increased by 62%.⁸⁵ The whalebone came from the bowheads, which meant the Arctic Ocean must have been a traffic jam as whaleships pursued bowheads before prices fell. Inevitably, prices fell, which sent the whalers looking for more whales in order to break even. By 1871, the North Pacific fleet had 35 vessels, with another eight steamers launched from San Francisco. Altogether, 40 of those whaleships left Honolulu in April 1871 and headed to the Arctic. Only a handful came back. Another body punch landed, and the whale fishery staggered back against the ropes.

The fleet passed through the Bering Strait in June but saw few whales in July, so

it hunted walrus instead. By August, with the season coming to an end, the whaleships occupied a strip of water 20 miles long by a half-mile wide off the coast of what is now northwest Alaska. The fleet caught some bowheads, but many more escaped under the ice floes. The ice started to close in on the ships in late August but the experienced captains expected a northeasterly gale to drive the ice offshore and allow the ships to work their way east. Such a scenario prevailed in previous seasons. One ship, the Oriole of New Bedford, was crushed before the fleet passed through Bering Strait and its captain merely sold whatever he could to the rest of the ships in the fleet. However, as September wore on, more ships fell victim to the ice. "By the eighth of the month, the pretense of whaling was ended and no one denied any longer the peril that threatened... The ice gave no sign of starting offshore; on the contrary, the land water did not now exceed a half mile in width and no more than half that distance was navigable."⁸⁶ The captains, who were responsible for 1,200 lives and \$3 million worth of property, held a series of meetings to devise a plan. On September 12, 1871, they met off Point Belcher and decided to abandon the 32 whaleships surrounded by ice. The whalers piled into whaleboats, brought whatever supplies would fit, and rowed to the fleet's remaining seven whaleships, which were in the open sea south of the ice. They eventually arrived in Honolulu.

The news reached New Bedford two months later. "The news received from the Arctic Fleet, is the worst ever received by our ship-owners," the Whalemen's Shipping List said on November 7, 1871. The loss was estimated to be at least \$1 million. Of the 40 ships originally in the fleet, 25 were from New Bedford. Twenty-two of those 25 were lost. The next week, on November 14, 1871, the newspaper published a statement by the captains that explained their decision. The newspaper said the statement "furnishes clear and intelligent reasons for their course." The captains said they abandoned their ships because there were no harbors nearby in which to seek haven and the ships only had enough supplies to last three months. "We think it would not be prudent to leave a single

soul to look after our vessels, as the first Westerly gale will crowd the ice ashore and either crush the ships or drive them hard upon the beach...,” the captains said. In that same issue, the Whalemen’s Shipping List said 1871 forever was a memorable year because “the calamity which has befallen our own city in the loss of so many vessels comprising the best part of our whaling fleet...will be seriously felt by the community. This is the most crushing blow which has ever fallen upon the whale-fishery...” Twenty-two of the lost vessels were from New Bedford, four from Honolulu, three from San Francisco, and two each from Edgartown, Massachusetts, and New London, Connecticut. A list of the abandoned New Bedford ships showed that they ranged in value from \$40,000 to \$75,000, with a total loss of more than \$1.1 million. The total cargo destroyed was 13,665 barrels of whale oil, 965 barrels of sperm oil, and 100,000 pounds of whalebone. That cargo, using the average prices for 1871, was worth more than \$669,000. The newspaper, which considered itself the mouthpiece of the industry, then took the time to give its readers a pep talk.

We suppose our merchants generally will maintain that they have a right to feel blue on account of such a serious loss of property...We should remember that the immense wealth of New Bedford has been built up almost entirely by the whale-fishery, and though the ices have seized a portion of our treasure, there is money and pluck enough left, and we predict our triumphant ships will continue to sail away and return with most precious freights.⁸⁷

In 1871, 176 ships were registered at New Bedford. One year later, that number was down to 143. The 1871 Arctic disaster also affected the market, as imports of all whale products decreased while their prices increased. In 1872, ships headed to the Arctic to save what they could from the stranded whalers. Three vessels in the fleet—the Helen Snow, Roscoe, and Sea Breeze, all of New Bedford—were crushed by the ice. The total loss was \$118,000. By 1874, Arctic whaling was a losing proposition, according to the newspaper. On January 27, 1874, the newspaper said the previous Arctic season was a poor one and “we should doubt if any one of the fleet now out, upon their return home, would be fitted again to go there...” By now, the fleet was down to 171 vessels, with 113

of them from New Bedford. The North Pacific fleet was down to 29.

However, old habits were hard to break, especially when petroleum prices continued to undercut sperm oil and whale oil prices. That competition forced prices down, but at the same time forced whalers to look for more whales to ease the financial blow. Unfortunately, adding more product to the market only dropped prices even more. However, whalebone continued in great demand so its prices increased, which gave whalers another incentive to head for the Arctic. Such a decision proved deadly during the 1876 season.

That year, the North Pacific fleet numbered 18 vessels, or about half the 1871 fleet. By this time, the ships regularly hunted east of Point Barrow in what is now northern Alaska. As the 1876 fleet approached Bering Strait, two ships collided and one of those ships sank. Then another ship was crushed in the ice. When the fleet arrived in the Arctic grounds, 14 vessels headed for whaling grounds northeast of Barrow. Unbeknownst to those ships, an iceberg headed north behind them and ultimately trapped the vessels there. A decision was made to abandon 13 ships and sail the remaining one out of the ice. About 200 whalers crammed into that one ship but 53 others decided to stay behind. In its October 24, 1876, report, the Whalers's Shipping List said the fates of those 53 men were "involved in uncertainty. The fact that so many men have remained with the fleet however affords ground for hope that the loss may prove less untrue than above reported...It is evident that a very severe loss has been occasioned to the Arctic whaling fleet..." Ten of the 13 abandoned vessels were from New Bedford, two were from Honolulu, and one from San Francisco. The estimated total loss was about \$800,000. More importantly, when the fleet returned to the Arctic the next season to rescue the 53 men, only three still were alive. Only one of the ships was found the next year, so the total loss was 12.

Arctic whaling continued after the disasters of 1871 and 1876, but only as a shadow of its former self. The crushings and abandonings continued as well, but they did

not approach the scales of those disasters of 1871 and 1876. By 1877, the entire United States whaling fleet consisted of 172 vessels. Six years earlier, before either of the Arctic disasters, the fleet consisted of 288 vessels. In a little more than half a decade, the fleet decreased by 40%. It was not until 1889 that “houses of refuge” were built in the Arctic to shelter trapped whalers. The Whalemen’s Shipping List said it was “glad to state that...a long felt need” finally had been met.⁸⁸

By this time, the American whaling fleet suffered four serious blows—the discovery of petroleum, the Civil War, the 1871 disaster, and the 1876 disaster—within a 17-year period. These blows were given extra power by the gradual disappearance of the whales. A previous section of this paper described the Golden Age of whaling, which lasted from about 1835 to the about 1860. What could be best described as the Age of Decline then ensued, beginning with Edmund L. Drake’s 69-foot-deep hole in the northwestern Pennsylvania ground. More body punches followed. The whaling fleet tried to stay on its economic feet against those blows, but the ground on which it stood was shaky. Every year, whale stocks decreased just enough to make the next year that much more difficult. Whalemen did not allow the ground on which they stood to solidify. As a result, they stood in quicksand.

In the whalemen’s corner was the Whalemen’s Shipping List, relaying the latest news, giving advice, and offering encouragement. The newspaper’s coverage during this Age of Decline was nearsighted: the body punches were reported after they were thrown, but the newspaper—which had the benefit of an overall perspective—did not impart any wisdom on how to better defend against future punches. Granted, the newspaper was dependent on the whalemen still going to sea, no matter what the economic conditions were. If the whalemen gave up, then the newspaper was finished. The Whalemen’s Shipping List was, above all else, an *industry* newspaper and not a general-interest newspaper. That is why it tried to keep its fighter in the ring for as many rounds as possible.

CONCLUSION

By the time the news of the 1876 Arctic disaster reached the readers of the Whalemen's Shipping List, the beginning of the end for the American whaling industry was underway. The disaster was the fourth serious blow to the industry in a span of 17 years and, when coupled with the changing economic conditions and diminishing whale stocks, persuaded many shipowners to get out of the business. However, that news was nothing new. As far back as January 11, 1859, the year the Golden Age ended and the Age of Decline began, the newspaper sounded a warning.

There will from present appearances, be a further diminution [sic] of vessels employed in the fleet, and with a diminished competition the business may again regain a healthy state. Other fields of enterprise now opened and opening present better opportunities for investment than are now offered in the whale fishery.

After the first Arctic disaster and before the second, the Whalemen's Shipping List said on February 4, 1873:

The continued purpose to sell whalers [whaleships]...shows the judgment of those who have long and successfully been engaged in the business...that it has become too hazardous, and its results too uncertain to continue it, when capital is promised a safer employment, and surer rewards in enterprises on the land, and in our own city where the products of two large cotton mills equal very nearly the aggregate value of the imports of the fishery yearly.

The New Bedford mills flourished as the whaling industry sputtered. In October 1897, the city celebrated the 50th anniversary of its incorporation. The New Bedford Morning Mercury, the former Daily Mercury newspaper started by the Lindsey family, printed a souvenir issue for those festivities. On the front page, it described New Bedford as "once the whaling port, now the manufacturing city." On the second page, a picture of a whaleboat was captioned, "A Past Industry," while a picture of a mill was captioned, "A Present Industry." The obituary was premature even though the whaling fleet in 1897 consisted of only 67 vessels, 32 of which were in New Bedford. In 1847, when the city was incorporated, the whaling fleet consisted of 727 vessels, 256 of which were registered in New Bedford. The Morning Mercury ably summed up the transition.

Fifty years ago...New Bedford had reached first place in her chosen industry—the whale fishery. The lapse of 50 years finds that industry practically a thing of

the past, so far as New Bedford is concerned, and yet today she ranks first in another chosen industry—the manufacture of fine cotton goods...So gradual has been the change from lance to loom, from harpoon to harness, from steering-oar to spindle, from barrel to bale, that New Bedford people hardly realize themselves the extent of the transformation.”

The Whalemen's Shipping List almost did not survive that transformation. As the industry declined, so did the amount of whaling news in the newspaper's pages. During the 1870s, the newspaper started publishing fiction, jokes, “strange but true” stories of crime and illness and unexplained phenomena, and general interest news that had nothing to do with whaling. On April 30, 1889, publisher Eben. P. Raymond announced that the newspaper was closing because of his continued illness and failing eyesight. Raymond had been unable to work on the newspaper for the previous five months and was forced to hire extra help, which drained the paper's finances, and he had not received “the aid *promised him* [emphasis in original] from his previous friends.” Raymond said he labored hard and faithfully for the previous 28 years (operating the newspaper while Benjamin Lindsey, Jr., was U.S. consul in St. Catharine's, Brazil, and then buying the publication in 1873), but for the last eight years of that service had received “a mere pittance” in salary. He then asked all those readers who owed him money to pay up, so he could settle his own debts. In that same issue, he published the obituary of Benjamin Lindsey, Jr., who died the previous week.

The paper was rescued, however, by Raymond's assistant, George R. Phillips, and a few business friends. Phillips immediately cut the newspaper's length in half, from four pages to two pages, and, for the last 25 years of its life, the newspaper was a shadow of its former self. The front of the single sheet contained the shrinking shipping list, sleepy market reports, and lethargic import totals, while the back contained nothing but advertisements, most of which had nothing to do with the whaling industry. The only whaling news consisted of announcements that another whaleship was sold and removed from service, and perhaps an occasional letter from the fleet.

During this period, the American whaling fleet withered slowly but steadily. In

1880, the American fleet consisted of 178 vessels. In 1890, it consisted of 97 and never again exceeded 100. In 1900, it was down to 48. New Bedford, once the whaling capital of the world, gradually lost ground until it was surpassed by San Francisco as the American whaling capital. In 1880, New Bedford had 128 whaling vessels. In 1890, it had 54. In 1900, it was down to 25. The Arctic ice continued to claim ships, but changing economic conditions claimed more. On May 14, 1907, the newspaper reprinted remarks made by Phillips to the local Board of Trade. The remarks went on for three long columns, but Phillips concluded:

[T]here are doubtless some present who may not know of what a great and successful industry it was fifty years and more ago, an industry which was the foundation of the great wealth secured by those who were engaged in carrying it on, and the saying that New Bedford at one time was the richest city in the Union...[I]t was to this out-door life, and character of it, that prolonged my life to this day.

The Whalemen's Shipping List hung on for another seven years, although it sang the same tune: "...[T]he low average prices for oils, and whalebone especially, are so low there is no incentive for owners to keep their vessels employed," the newspaper said on March 17, 1914.

Finally, on December 29, 1914, Phillips silenced the voice of the whaling industry. At that time, the whaling fleet consisted of 32 vessels that weighed a combined 6,613 tons. New Bedford had 21 vessels that weighed a combined 3,828 tons or, in other terms, 66% of the American whaling fleet and 58% of the tonnage. The ratios were equivalent to previous years, but the clout was not. The weekly newspaper, which once circulation 2,500 copies every week, no longer had anything to write about.

Often in the career of a reporter it is a part of the day's work to write the obituary of a man, to say a few kind words concerning his activities in business, public office or social life. Rarely does the occasion arise when one is permitted to pass on the life of an institution.

The Whalemen's Shipping List and Merchants' Transcript is to end its existence; its days are over, and with the passing of this institution, which has lived a simple life for a few more years than the allotted [sic] three score and ten, it is fitting that its career should be briefly chronicled...

No longer will The Whalemen's Shipping List and Merchants' Transcript be a Tuesday morning event in New Bedford...

Phillips then gave a history of the newspaper, starting with the plan hatched by Henry Lindsey in 1843 to publish a journal devoted exclusively to the American whaling fleet. The newspaper debuted on March 17, 1843, when the fleet comprised 643 vessels, of which 214, or 33%, sailed from New Bedford. That port was the fourth-largest in the United States and soon would become the richest city per capita in the United States. Total industry revenues in 1843 from the sales of spermaceti, whale oil, and whalebone were about \$6.3 million. The industry reached its zenith in 1846 with 735 vessels and the newspaper was a partner in that success, sending copies to subscribers around the United States and around the world.

It was among the first of trade journals, and among the most successful, read not only by agents and manufacturers, but by the families of men who went down to the sea in ships in pursuit of the whale...There was the place that thousands of eager readers looked for some inkling of what was going on on the high seas, and where, if there was any news, it was sure to be found.

The height of the sperm whale fishery was 1837 when about 5.3 million gallons were imported. The height of the right whale, or whale oil, fishery was 1851 when about 10.3 million gallons were imported. The whalebone fishery peaked in 1853 when about 5.7 million pounds were imported. Through all this prosperity, and the ensuing poverty, the newspaper aimed to tell the truth, Phillips said.

There is a newspaper which boasts that if anything is seen in its columns, 'It is so.' Likewise the Shipping List. There was no room in its columns for waterfront rumors; if they were ever to be let in under any pretext it was with an apology and explanation of just what they were. The manager of the Shipping List always had ample time to verify his facts before the paper went to press; if he didn't the facts waited a week before they received [sic] the stamp of approval of the Whalemens' Shipping List and Merchants' Transcript.

What Phillips should have included was that the newspaper also gave its opinions on certain developments of the day, staunchly defended the whaling interests, and continually urged whalemens to forge ahead even in the toughest of economic times. So the Whalemens' Shipping List and Merchants' Transcript was more than a newspaper to its readers. It was one of them. It understood them. It advised them. It encouraged them. It sympathized with them. Ultimately, it rose and fell with them.

And a good journal goes the way of many a staunch old whaling bark. It has outlived its usefulness, there is no demand for it; its subscription list has fallen off and it is not self-sustaining. So then the Whalemens' Shipping List and Merchants' Journal [sic] is to be hauled out on the beach, its activities at an end, yet we shall expect to hear, when news comes in of some surviving whaler in trouble sunk or disabled, 'Where's the last Shipping List?' and to look up to see the shipnews man, through force of habit, asking for his Bible that he may find the correct text.

APPENDIX 1

The following tables were compiled from the pages of the Whalemen's Shipping List and Merchants' Transcript. They are presented in five-year intervals.

Table 2.--Imports of American Whale Fishery, 1838-1913.

Year	Sperm Oil (Barrels)	Whale Oil (Barrels)	Whalebone (Pounds)
1838	132,356	226,552	not recorded
1843	166,985	206,727	2,127,270
1848	107,976	280,656	2,003,000
1853	103,077	260,114	5,652,300
1858	81,941	182,223	1,540,600
1863	65,055	62,974	488,750
1868	47,174	65,575	900,850
1873	42,053	40,014	206,396
1878	43,508	33,778	207,259
1883	24,595	24,170	254,037
1888	16,265	17,185	334,572
1893	15,253	8,110	411,315
1898	12,520	5,295	246,120
1903	18,109	1,260	74,850
1908	14,075	1,675	102,000
1913	19,090	950	1,000

Table 3.--Average Price of Imported Whale Products, 1838-1913.

Year	Sperm Oil (Per Gallon)	Whale Oil (Per Gallon)	Whalebone (Per Pound)
1838	\$.83	\$.32	\$.195
1843	.63	.345	.3575
1848	1.0033	.33	.254
1853	1.2475	.5817	.345
1858	1.21	.54	.9225
1863	1.61	.9525	1.53
1868	1.92	.82	1.025
1873	1.48	.62	1.08
1878	.915	.44	2.46
1883	.97	.54	2.87
1888	.62	.35	2.78
1893	.735	.425	3.08
1898	.53	.34	3.10
1903	.56	.38	5.25
1908	.57	.32	3.75
1913	.48	.35	no sales recorded

Table 4.--Size of American and New Bedford Whaling Fleets, 1844-1914.

Year	Total Ships	New Bedford (% of total)	Total Tonnage	New Bedford (% of total)
Jan. 1, 1844	644	219 = 34%	200,484	69,803 = 35%
" " 1849	614	250 = 41%	196,110	81,075 = 41%
" " 1854	668	318 = 48%	208,399	107,512 = 52%
" " 1859	625	316 = 51%	195,115	107,931 = 55%
" " 1864	304	197 = 65%	88,785	64,815 = 73%
" " 1869	336	178 = 53%	74,519	50,628 = 68%
" " 1874	171	113 = 66%	41,191	32,556 = 79%
" " 1879	186	132 = 71%	40,602	33,368 = 82%
" " 1884	144	93 = 65%	33,119	22,877 = 69%
" " 1889	106	63 = 59%	25,488	16,120 = 63%
" " 1894	90	43 = 48%	20,107	9,437 = 47%
" " 1899	56	25 = 45%	11,436	4,800 = 42%
" " 1904	42	25 = 60%	9,378	5,428 = 58%
" " 1909	31	18 = 58%	7,642	4,710 = 62%
" " 1914	34	20 = 59%	7,026	3,795 = 54%

Table 5.--Size of North Pacific Fleet and Its Catch, 1838-1913.

Year	Total Ships	Average Catch (Barrels Whale Oil)	Total Catch (Barrels Whale Oil)
1838	2	1,400	2,800
1843	108	1,349	146,800
1848	145	766	111,070
1853	238	912	217,056
1858	196	620	121,650
1863	42	857	36,010
1868	61	708	43,230
1873	29	665	19,300
1878	17	770	13,080
1883	35	274	9,605
1888	41	383	15,700
1893	46	140	6,440
1898	21	170	3,455
1903	20	38	760
1908	no figures listed		
1913	no figures listed		

APPENDIX 2

Two significant histories of the American whale fishery were written during the lifetime of the Whalemen's Shipping List and Merchants' Transcript. Those two works were included in the research for this study. The following are excerpts from the newspaper's reviews of those books.

History of the American Whale Fishery (1878), by Alexander Starbuck.

A merely superficial view of this elaborate work will show at once the formidable difficulties which its author must have encountered in its compilation. That these have been successfully overcome the work itself gives ample proof, while its fidelity and accuracy are amply avouched by the well known practical familiarity with his subject attained to by its author, as a native and former resident of Nantucket...

The volume is furnished with a complete index, alphabetically arranged, and comprises a great amount of miscellaneous information, for which we must refer seekers to the work itself.

Copies of the above book may be had at this office. Price \$5.00 per copy.
—May 21, 1878.

A History of the American Whale Fishery (1907), by Walter S. Tower:

The work shows that a vast amount of research and study have been devoted to it, and in most particulars it may be said to be generally correct...

It is doubtful if those now carrying on the industry will fully coincide with Mr. Tower in his conclusions [*Example: Tower said in his preface, "Whaling is practically dead."*]

The history should have a place in the many valuable private libraries of this community.

—May 28, 1907.

NOTES

1. Walter S. Tower, A History of the American Whale Fishery (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania, 1907), iii.
2. Marine Mammal Protection Act of 1972, Statutes at Large, 86, 1027 (1972).
3. Melvin F. Labrode, "50 Years Ago: Whaling Journal Bows Out," Sunday Standard-Times, 24 January 1965, 14.
4. Whalemens's Shipping List and Merchants' Transcript, "Gas In New Bedford," Whalemens's Shipping List and Merchants' Transcript, 29 June 1852, 94.
5. a. Whalemens's Shipping List and Merchants' Transcript, "The New Lamp," Whalemens's Shipping List and Merchants' Transcript, 3 July 1860, 2.
 b. Whalemens's Shipping List and Merchants' Transcript, "Report on Whale Oil Lamps," Whalemens's Shipping List and Merchants' Transcript, 20 November 1860, 2.
6. Old Dartmouth Historical Society, History of Whaling (New Bedford, Mass.: Old Dartmouth Historical Society, 1989), 1.
7. Sydney Frost, The Whaling Question (San Francisco: Friends of the Earth, 1979), 24.
8. Farley Mowatt, A Whale for the Killing (Baltimore: Penguin Books Inc., 1973), 47-49.
9. Old Dartmouth Historical Society, *supra* note 6, at 1; and Richard Ellis, Men and Whales (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1991), 38-41.
10. R. Ellis, *Ibid.*, 42-47.
11. R. Ellis, *Ibid.*, 44.
12. R. Ellis, *Ibid.*, 42-44.
13. Herbert L. Aldrich, "New Bedford in the Busy Eighties," New England Magazine, May 1886; (reprint, New Bedford, Mass.: Reynolds Printing, 1937), 3 (page reference is to reprint edition).
14. R. Ellis, *supra* note 9, at 98.
15. a. Alexander Starbuck, History of the American Whale Fishery (Waltham, Mass.: Alexander Starbuck, 1878; reprint, New York: Argosy-Antiquarian Ltd., 1964), 5 (page reference is to reprint edition).
 b. Tower, *supra* note 1, at 19-20.
 c. R. Ellis, *supra* note 9, at 98-99.
16. Tower, *supra* note 1, at 19.
17. Tower, *Ibid.*, 20.
18. Starbuck, *supra* note 15a, at 6-7.

19. Starbuck, *Ibid.*, at 9.
20. Starbuck, *Ibid.*, 11.
21. Starbuck, *Ibid.*, 16.
22. Tower, *supra* note 1, at 26.
23. John R. Spears, The Story of the New England Whalers, 2d ed., (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1910), 339.
24. a. Starbuck, *supra* note 15a, at 20.
b. Tower, *supra* note 1, at 28.
c. Old Dartmouth Historical Society, *supra* note 6, at 2-3.
25. Starbuck, *Ibid.*, 153.
26. Starbuck, *Ibid.*, 168 passim. Unless otherwise noted, whale fishery statistics up to 1843 are taken from Starbuck, and Tower, *supra* note 1, who were quoting government statistics and newspapers of the time. Those newspapers included the Whalemen's Shipping List and Merchants' Transcript.
27. Starbuck, *Ibid.*, 36.
28. a. Leonard Bolles Ellis, History of New Bedford and Its Vicinity, 1602-1892 (Syracuse: D. Mason & Co., 1892), 405: "From authentic sources it has been well established that as early as 1750 shore whaling was carried on here."
b. Daniel Ricketson, The History of New Bedford, Bristol County, Massachusetts (New Bedford, Mass.: Daniel Ricketson, 1858), 58: "It is well authenticated by the statements of several cotemporaries [sic], lately deceased, that Joseph Russell had pursued the business as early as the year 1755."
c. Whalemen's Shipping List and Merchants' Transcript, "Whaling in the Olden Time," Whalemen's Shipping List and Merchants' Transcript, 14 September 1852, 200: "We have no certain knowledge of the earliest period at which he embarked in the business, but we have reliable authority for placing it some years previous to 1765...it is well known here from tradition, that JOSEPH RUSSELL [emphasis in original] pursued the business some ten or more years previous."
29. Whalemen's Shipping List and Merchants' Transcript, "A Pioneer Voyage," Whalemen's Shipping List and Merchants' Transcript, 7 May 1901, 2.
30. Edouard A. Stackpole, The Sea-Hunters (New York: J.B. Lippincott Company, 1953), 55.
31. a. Old Dartmouth Historical Society, *supra* note 6, at 3.
b. Tower, *supra* note 1, at 28.
c. Starbuck, *supra* note 15a, at 56.
32. Starbuck, *Ibid.*, 57.
33. Whalemen's Shipping List and Merchants' Transcript, "The American Whaling Business, Whale Ships and Masters of Whale Ships," Whalemen's Shipping List and Merchants' Transcript, 8 June 1847, 56.

34. L.B. Ellis, *supra* note 28a, at 409.
35. Starbuck, *supra* note 15a, at 62-63.
36. Tower, *supra* note 1, at 40.
37. Tower, *Ibid.*, 45-46.
38. Starbuck, *supra* note 15a, at 95.
39. Stackpole, *supra* note 30, at 288-289.
40. Tower, *supra* note 1, at 55.
41. See Appendix 1.
42. Tower, *supra* note 1, at 6-7.
43. David P. Forsyth, The Business Press In America 1750-1865 (Philadelphia: Chilton Company, 1964), 1-2.
44. Frank Luther Mott, American Journalism, 2d ed., (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1950), 9.
45. L.B. Ellis, *supra* note 28a, at 522-531.
46. Ricketson, *supra* note 28b, at 149.
47. Sidney Kobre, Development of American Journalism (Dubuque: Wm. C. Brown Co., 1969), 198.
48. Whalemen's Shipping List and Merchants' Transcript, "The Last Issue," Whalemen's Shipping List and Merchants' Transcript, 29 December 1914, 2.
49. Whalemen's Shipping List and Merchants' Transcript, 17 March 1843, 1-8.
50. Whalemen's Shipping List and Merchants' Transcript, 28 March 1843, 24.
51. Statistical tables, with the data recorded in five-year intervals, are contained in Appendix 1. This data was compiled from the pages of the Whalemen's Shipping List and Merchants' Transcript.
52. Starbuck, *supra* note 15a, at 98.
53. a. Starbuck, *Ibid.*, 98: "In the year 1835 commenced that period of whaling which might be termed its Golden Age, for during the next decade the whale-fishery assumed its greatest importance and reached the zenith of its commercial value."
b. Tower, *supra* note 1, at 50: "The year 1835 marks the beginning of a period of almost phenomenal growth and prosperity in the whale fishery, the effects of which lasted for two decades—the culmination of the Golden Age of whaling."
54. A volume year typically began in March.
55. Appendix 1 and Tower, *supra* note 1, at 123.

56. R. Ellis, *supra* note 9, at 170. New Holland is now Australia.
57. Whalemens's Shipping List and Merchants' Transcript, "The American Whaling Business, Whale Ships and Masters of Whale Ships," Whalemens's Shipping List and Merchants' Transcript, 8 June 1847, 2.
58. Tower, *supra* note 1, at 59-60.
59. Unless otherwise noted, all figures are from annual statistical reviews of the Whalemens's Shipping List and Merchants' Transcript. See Appendix 1.
60. J.N. Tønnessen and A.O. Johnsen, The History of Modern Whaling (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982), 3-7.
61. a. Tower, *supra* note 1, at 80-97.
b. R. Ellis, *supra* note 9, at 229-230.
c. Tønnessen and Johnsen, *Ibid.*, 16-705 *passim*.
62. Tønnessen and Johnsen, *Ibid.*, 3.
63. R. Ellis, *supra* note 9, at 238.
64. Dates are taken from pages of Whalemens's Shipping List and Merchants' Transcript; R. Ellis, *supra* note 9; and Everett S. Allen, Children of the Light (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1973), chap. 12 *passim*.
65. Tønnessen and Johnsen, *supra* note 60, at 12.
66. Starbuck, *supra* note 15a, at 112-113.
67. Tower, *supra* note 1, at 67.
68. Paul H. Giddens, The Birth of the Oil Industry (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1938; reprint, New York: Arno Press, 1972), xiv-xv (page references are to reprint edition).
69. David D. Leven, Done In Oil, Rev. ed., (New York: The Ranger Press, 1942), 40-41. All oil production statistics used in this paper are from Leven's tables.
70. J.T. Henry, The Early and Later History of Petroleum (Philadelphia: Jas. B. Rodgers Co., 1873; reprint, New York: Augustus M. Kelly, 1970), 95 (page reference is to reprint edition).
71. Annual revenues for whale fishery are taken from Starbuck, *supra* note 15a, at 660-661.
72. L.B. Ellis, *supra* note 28a, at 422.
73. Giddens, *supra* note 68, at 73.
74. Giddens, *Ibid.*, xxii.
75. New York Journal of Commerce, "The Whaling Interest," Whalemens's Shipping List and Merchants' Transcript, 2 July 1861, 2.

76. Leven, *supra* note 69, at 58.
77. Giddens, *supra* note 68, at 193.
78. Leven, *supra* note 69, at 40-41; and Whalemen's Shipping List and Merchants' Transcript, 29 December 1914, 2.
79. Tower, *supra* note 1, at 77.
80. Starbuck, *supra* note 15a, at 100.
81. a. R. Ellis, *supra* note 9, at 231-234.
b. Tower, *supra* note 1, at 77-78.
c. Starbuck, *supra* note 15a, at 100-103.
82. R. Ellis, *Ibid.*, 233.
83. R. Ellis, *Ibid.*, 232.
84. L.B. Ellis, *supra* note 28a, at 351.
85. All statistics taken from the annual reviews of the Whalemen's Shipping List and Merchants' Transcript.
86. Allen, *supra* note 64, at 230-231.
87. Whalemen's Shipping List and Merchants' Transcript, "The Arctic Disaster," Whalemen's Shipping List and Merchants' Transcript, 14 November 1871, 2.
88. Whalemen's Shipping List and Merchants' Transcript, "The Whale Fishery. Annual Review for the Year 1888," Whalemen's Shipping List and Merchants' Transcript, 29 January 1889, 1.
89. Morning Mercury, "The Story of the Celebration of the Semi-Centennial of the Incorporation of New Bedford as a City," Morning Mercury, October 1897, 9.

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